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# THE GIRL HE LEFT BEHIND HIM

BY

R. MOUNTENEY JEPHSON

AUTHOR OF "TOM BULLKLEY OF LISSINGTON"

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

TOM BULLKLEY OF LISSINGTON

A PINK WEDDING

THE ROLL OF THE DRUM

WITH THE COLOURS

THE RED RAG

# CONTENTS.


| CHAP. | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| I. | ANTIPATHY | 6 |
| II. | SYMPATHY | 20 |
| III. | ACCOMMODATION | 37 |
| IV. | POSITION AND OPPOSITION | 44 |
| V. | ALTERCATION | 57 |
| VI. | "DADDLES" | 66 |
| VII. | THE ENGINEER AND HIS PETARD | 72 |
| VIII. | "GIVING THE OLD BOY A DRESSING" | 85 |
| IX. | A TRYING TÊTE-À-TÊTE | 92 |
| X. | A LOVE MATCH | 98 |
| XI. | DETECTION | 108 |
| XII. | CASTLES IN THE AIR | 118 |
| XIII. | HOME | 128 |
| XIV. | BUSINESS IS BUSINESS | 138 |
| XV. | TEMPTATION | 148 |
| XVI. | "THAT WRETCHED GIRL!" | 157 |
| XVII. | "THE GIRL HE LEFT BEHIND HIM" | 164 |
| XVIII. | IMPLACABILITY | 175 |
| XIX. | LITTLE LIZ | 182 |
| XX. | HOUSEHOLD GODS | 192 |

| CHAP. | | PAGE |
|---|---|---|
| XXI. | "A YEAR TO-DAY" | 198 |
| XXII. | DOUBTS AND FEARS | 204 |
| XXIII. | ABDUCTION | 211 |
| XXIV. | EXPULSION | 224 |
| XXV. | "I TOLD YOU SO!" | 232 |
| XXVI. | HOMELESS | 238 |
| XXVII. | A FRIEND IN NEED | 248 |
| XXVIII. | LATE FOR PARADE | 254 |
| XXIX. | "PIMPERNELL" | 262 |
| XXX. | THE INTERESTING STRANGER | 273 |
| XXXI. | RAISING THE WIND | 288 |
| XXXII. | PIMPERNELL'S EDITOR | 299 |
| XXXIII. | DOLLY'S EDITOR | 307 |
| XXXIV. | AGAINST THE WORLD | 312 |
| XXXV. | DAWN | 319 |
| XXXVI. | AN OLD SOLDIER'S STORY | 327 |
| XXXVII. | SNATCHED FROM THE GRAVE | 343 |
| XXXVIII. | MORE LIGHT ON DARKNESS | 347 |
| XXXIX. | A SUCCESSFUL NOVELIST | 357 |
| XL. | RECONCILIATION | 365 |
| XLI. | "KISS ME, DOLLY" | 369 |
| XLII. | "A REGULAR ATHOLSTONE" | 373 |
| | CONCLUSION | 378 |

# THE GIRL HE LEFT BEHIND HIM.

## PROLOGUE.

My story, like most careers, begins with the light-hearted exuberance and folly of youth; but again, like most careers, it will not be "all ale and cakes," all frivolity and fun. With most of us, as life flows onward, the "dusty chaff of empty pleasures" is swept away before the chilling blast of trial and adversity. Sometimes it is blown away at once and for ever by a tempest of tribulation; sometimes by the constant puffs of disappointments and worries. But disappear it will; in some cases merely to leave the heavy dross of morose cynicism, in others, many others, to disclose a rich weight of golden grain which had been hitherto hidden under the worthless bran and chaff.

Till from the straw, the flail the corn doth beat,
  Until the chaff be purgèd from the wheat;
Yea, till the mill the grains in pieces tear,
  The richness of the flour will scarce appear.
So, till men's persons great afflictions touch,
  If worth be found, their worth is not so much,
Because, like wheat in straw, they have not yet
  That value which in threshing they may get.

## CHAPTER I.

### ANTIPATHY.

"I SAY, let's draw old Dolly. There's a light in his hut."

"No, it's no fun drawing him. He never gets riled, and it's awfully slow work drawing a fellow if he doesn't cut up rough. Besides, Dorrien is with him."

"Is he? Then we'll leave him alone. Would just as soon think of drawing the chief as Dorrien. I'll tell you what, though, there's that new fellow who has just exchanged to us lives in the same hut. I vote we throw his furniture about, just by way of reminding him that he might make himself a little more agreeable. He's sure not to be back from town until about two or three o'clock."

This proposal was carried, *nem. con.;* and a noisy group of very young subalterns tumbled over each other into the dark narrow passage of an Aldershot hut.

"Let's get a light from Dolly's room," suggested some one.

This was seconded with considerable warmth by a young gentleman whose shins had just come into smart contact with the common coal-box of the double establishment, which stood in the passage, and the party burst unceremoniously into the quarters of the brother-officer they chose to call "Dolly."

"Now, then, what are you youngsters up to? If a deluded country had not prematurely enrolled you amongst

her defenders, you would all have been in your beds at school or in your virtuous homes snoring long ago," came a voice lazily from the depths of an arm-chair. "And shut the door after you, can't you?" added the voice in accents less languid.

On this the door was promptly closed, and the owners of sundry flushed young faces and smooth chins crowded into the tiny room. They were all in mess-dress, which with the majority was not the only outward sign of having dined.

"Now, what mischief are you young beggars brewing?" again proceeded from the arm-chair.

The authoritative questioner was not the so-called Dolly, but his intimate friend and brother-officer, Captain Studholme Dorrien. Dolly himself was occupied in nursing a tuft of hair on his chin termed, grandiloquently, an "imperial," familiarly a "charley," and smiling with mild good-nature on his hilarious visitors.

"Such a lark, Dorrien! We're going to pile all that fellow Garstang's furniture up in the middle of his room, and stick Podgy's bull-pup on the top. Give us a light, Dolly."

"Upon my word," apostrophised Dorrien, "when I contemplate these specimens of military genius, I wonder where all the future Marlboroughs and Wellingtons are to come from!"

"Oh! we never expect anything complimentary from *you*, Dorrien," said a rash youth.

"Well, you never get it," was the reply. "So, at all events as far as *I* am concerned, disappointment is not shading your young days. Now, take my advice and leave Garstang and that bull-dog alone. It's my opinion they'll both show their teeth, and use them too, if you try on any games with them."

"Oh! we don't mind; never fear," was the valiant reply—pot-valiant, I am afraid; and the recently-emancipated school-boys, having abstracted one of Dolly's lighted

candles after a good-natured struggle with the owner, withdrew to carry their humorous designs into effect.

Their unpopular brother-officer's room being locked, the door was unceremoniously kicked in, and they forthwith proceeded to pile up the furniture in a heap in the middle of the apartment.

All their attempts, however, to crown the pile with "Podgy's bull-pup" met with such fierce opposition from that sagacious animal, that they were reluctantly forced to dispense with their crowning effect.

As this had been looked upon as the cream of the joke, it was felt that something else must be substituted.

"Here's a bottle of brandy. At all events we'll have a liquor all round," remarked some one.

Hereupon the youths behaved with marked hospitality to each other with Captain Garstang's brandy, and at length one of them drew from his potations a happy inspiration.

"I say, let's make him an apple-pie bed!"

In a few moments, that highly-flavoured, fine old military joke was in full preparation, and they waxed uproariously mirthful over such humorous feats as stuffing the coal-scuttle into the pillow-case, the fire-irons under the bolster, and "Podgy's bull-pup" between the sheets. This animal, with a sagacity beyond his years, at once recognised in this joke a point he had utterly failed to detect in the last, and now entered into the plot with the liveliest satisfaction.

"*Finish c'ronat opush*," said one of the jovial crew, as he put the finishing touch to the *jeu d'esprit* by sitting on that particular part of the counterpane under which "Podgy's bull-pup" lay curled. The result afforded the remainder a satisfactory assurance of the zeal to be expected from their four-legged fellow-conspirator in the plot against Captain Garstang's comfort and peace of mind; and, roaring with laughter, they returned to Dolly's quarters to restore the borrowed candle and recount their exploits.

Dorrien had passed that very verdant stage of youth when

a bull-dog in a bed was a screaming farce, and Dolly was too good-natured to see any point in a practical joke where annoyance was the sole object; and so the young revellers, finding themselves unappreciated, took their departure, remarking, as soon as they were out of ear-shot, that "Dorrien was getting slow, and making Dolly as bad as himself."

"What made those young beggars so festive to-night, Dolly?" asked Dorrien.

Dolly laughed, and replied that young Hardup's long-suffering parent had just delivered him out of the hands of the Jews, and he had been having a "grog-fight" in his room to celebrate the event, and he supposed it was that.

Dorrien and Dolly were great friends, but it may be noticed that while the former addressed the latter as Dolly, Dolly called Dorrien by his patronymic in full. The fact was, Dorrien was one of those men no one ever dreams of calling by any name but their right one. On the other hand, Dolly was a being who could no more have gone through life without a nickname than a dog can scamper down a race-course without being howled at. There were many little peculiarities and weaknesses about Dolly certain to procure him endless godfathers in this style of nomenclature. He was very fond of dress, and much addicted to the largest patterns and the most gorgeous hues. He wore an eye-glass, though I do not think he was short-sighted, and an "imperial," and, last though not least, he was possessed of unbounded good-nature, to take advantage of which is the invariable custom of man. For a long time he answered with imperturbable good temper to an infinity of names, but at last he had settled down quietly into "Dolly," and "Dolly" he was to every one. So carried away have I myself been by the idea that in Dolly's case a surname was a superfluity, that I have quite forgotten to mention that he had one, and that it was "Jones."

"I tell you what it is, Dorrien, I've a good mind to go

and put Garstang's room right again," said Dolly. And as he spoke he leaned against the mantelpiece, if we may call the small deal shelf which projected about two inches over the tiny grate by that name, and showed off to advantage his weakness in dress. Even now he was wasting his sweetness on the desert air of an Aldershot hut, attired in a smoking suit of blue, with pea-green binding and stripes down the trousers, and a pair of sky-blue slippers.

"I shouldn't bother my head, Dolly, about it. I think all that sort of thing childish nonsense, but at the same time I would just as soon that fellow Garstang had an uncomfortable night's rest as any man of my acquaintance. There's a lot of swagger and bounce in the fellow, but there's not a true ring about the article. They say there was something shady about his exchange, and I'm sorry he came to us."

"Well, at all events, he has one recommendation—he's a sportsman."

"I don't believe he is. You think, Dolly, because you ride like a tailor, though I will admit you ride hard, and can't hit a haystack, though I will also admit that you blaze away at everything you see, that any fellow who can shove along across country without riding over a hound or tumbling off at a fence, and get through a day's cover-shooting without hitting a dog or a keeper, is a thorough sportsman."

Dolly was not in the least offended by these remarks; on the contrary, they raised up so amusing a vision of infuriated masters of hounds and indignant gamekeepers, that he laughed heartily. He was unique in his enjoyment of jokes against himself.

"No, Dolly; that's where you are such an old duffer. A fellow has only to know Ruff's Guide by heart and cram it with a lot of turfy slang down your throat, and you're at once taken in. Garstang can tell you, I dare say, every winner of the Derby from 1780 to last year, with their pedigrees and riders, and many other such interesting facts;

but it's my opinion he looks upon a horse as he looks upon dice, or cards, or billiards, merely as something to make money out of. And as to his shooting—why, I dare say he can hold his own at the gun club where he can make it pay, and that's all. No, Dolly, you never know the difference between a sportsman and a sporting man. He's the latter, I'll allow, but I won't credit him with any of the qualities of the former."

"Perhaps you're prejudiced, Dorrien."

"Perhaps I am, and I'll allow I've an antipathy to the fellow. However, I'll try and be charitable, Dolly, old boy, and, by way of being so, I don't mind if I go and help you to put his room straight. At all events, we'll kick that dog out. He's a varmint little brute, and certain to pin any one he doesn't know."

"Come along," said Dolly, promptly seizing a candle and leading the way.

They had succeeded in dislodging the bull-dog, and were in the act of extricating the coal-scuttle from the pillow-case when the outer door of the hut was kicked open, and in a moment Captain Garstang, flushed with liquor, soured with ill luck at cards, and furious at the apparent liberty, stood before them.

Dorrien was about the coolest hand in the regiment, but it must be admitted that for a moment or two he looked rather foolish, until, catching sight of Dolly's sheepish countenance, he broke into a careless laugh.

This, of course, was oil on the flames of Garstang's wrath, and all his ire was directed against Dorrien. As to Dolly, he looked several degrees below notice, as he stood holding the coal-scuttle in one hand, and idiotically scratching the tuft on his chin with the other.

"Upon my word, Captain Dorrien," sneered Garstang, "your facetiousness is only to be equalled by your confounded impertinence."

Dorrien's brow grew black. He was a proud, head-

strong man, and, if the truth must be told, more accustomed to speak than be spoken to in this strain. He felt, however, that appearances were against him.

"I don't wish to bandy words with you," he said, coolly enough. "The line you have chosen to take precludes all attempt at explanation. But if you fancy that Jones or I have had any hand in this childish nonsense, you're mistaken. I wouldn't take the trouble."

"Captain Dorrien will excuse my believing my own senses in preference even to his word," sneered Garstang, glancing significantly at the tongs in Dorrien's hand and the poker which protruded from the bed.

Dorrien threw the tongs contemptuously into the fireplace, and advanced a step.

"Do you mean to say you think I'm descending to a wretched paltry lie?"

"No, certainly not. *Think* is not exactly the word which expresses my ideas on the subject," said Garstang, wrapping up the colloquial brickbat, "You're a liar," in silver paper and hurling it point-blank at his adversary. It did not strike any the softer for its flimsy covering, and Dorrien strode forward.

Dolly threw himself between the two, and used the coal-scuttle as a sort of peace-maker's wand.

"Don't have a row about such a stupid nonsensical thing. Recollect you're officers and gentlemen. Have it out with fire-irons—I mean fire-arms—if you like; but don't go fighting like common navvies. Be calm, be calm," added Dolly, as he poked his fist into Dorrien's eye and rammed the bottom of the coal-scuttle into Garstang's face. "It can all be explained in two minutes if you'll only listen to reason; only do be cool, whatever you are."

"Put that infernal machine down, Dolly," said Dorrien. "You're quite right. I shall demand satisfaction like a gentleman, not like a bargee."

"That's right. Be cool and collected, both of you, like

me," said Dolly, putting the coal-scuttle down on the centre of the table, and rumpling up his hair until he looked like an infuriated cockatoo.

"You heard everything that passed, Dolly, and I leave it in your hands. Either an ample apology, or satisfaction in the old-fashioned way. Duelling is supposed to have died out of the service, and so are men who call each other liars. But if the latter come in, I suppose the former must too. I'll wait in your room, Dolly."

So saying, Dorrien walked across the passage into Dolly's quarters, and by the time he had comfortably settled himself down in his old seat with a book and a cigar, every trace of passion had disappeared.

"By Jove!" he remarked with a careless laugh, "I don't think I ever took the trouble to get so angry before in my life. But, then, I don't recollect ever having been called a liar before. That fellow will apologise, I know, and a good thing too. It's all very well to talk about pistols for two when one's angry, but there's a great deal of difficulty about such matters nowadays. I wonder what sort of a second old Dolly would make; probably put the bullet in before the powder, I should think."

Here Dolly himself entered, accompanied by Garstang.

"Captain Dorrien," said the latter, "Dolly Jones" (even on serious occasions people couldn't drop the "Dolly") "has explained the whole thing to me. He tells me that so far from being the author of this silly and impertinent trick, you were doing all you could to remedy it. In the face of this explanation, I cannot withhold the ample apology you demand for the expressions I was betrayed into using in the heat of the moment. Indeed, had I known the facts of the case, I should have been the first to thank instead of insult you. There's my hand."

Dorrien took the hand, but in truth there was not that cordiality in the action which there generally is between two Englishmen making up their differences. Garstang's words

were fair and outspoken, but there was a look in his eye and there was a sneer about his mouth which did not endorse them. Unruly member though the tongue may be, it is much more under control than eyes or mouth, and lends itself to a lie or any nasty job more readily than either of the other two. It was neither conviction nor generosity which prompted Garstang, but policy. He was a man of the world—indeed, he lived upon it—and saw clearly that it would be unwise to live at feud with Dorrien, who, though only one of the junior captains of the regiment, possessed an enormous amount of influence in it. The only change in his feelings Dolly's explanation had wrought was an increase of dislike. He had hated the man when he had thought him in the wrong; he hated him more when he now found he had been in the right.

On the other hand, there was not a whit more cordiality about Dorrien. He was an independent fellow—people till they knew him called him "conceited and bumptious"—and he never took the trouble to conceal a dislike he felt. He had conceived an antipathy to this Garstang which was not to be dispelled by a few honeyed words. However, they shook hands, and there was an end of the matter outwardly.

"Now, that's right," said Dolly. I do like to see fellows shake hands after a bit of a row. Sit down, Garstang, and have a liquor. I dare say you're cold after your journey down from town."

"Well, it is rather chilly, and it's a long journey down by that cold meat train," said Garstang, as he took the seat and helped himself. "These Aldershot huts are like sieves."

Dolly immediately drew the curtains of the little window closer, tried the fastening of the door, and poked the fire; and as he did all these without getting up from his chair, but merely by tilting it backwards, forwards, or sideways, it could not have been the size that was the matter with the room.

In return for these little attentions, Captain Garstang

proceeded to enlighten his host on the subjects of "public form" and "private trial," and to give him a few "straight tips" and "put him on to a good thing" or two. His remarks were mostly addressed to Dolly; for Dorrien lounged in his chair, smoking with an air of calm indifference to all this knowing talk that was very irritating to Garstang, and made him mentally retract his apology half-a-dozen times over.

"Have you made the acquaintance of any of the married officers' people yet, Garstang?" asked Dolly, who was rather out of his depth—that is to say, if he had any depth at all—and was anxious to change the subject.

"Well, I called on the chief yesterday before I went up to town. He softens down in his own house wonderfully. But he may well do that without injuring himself, for he's a cast-iron sort of old fellow out of it."

"Oh! he's nothing. Did you see his sister, Miss Macnamara Belmont?" asked Dolly, with a perceptible tremor in his tones.

"No; that's a pleasure to come."

Dolly laughed nervously, as if implying that there were different ideas of pleasure, and that, according to his, the immediate vicinity of the lady in question was not exactly like Rosherville Gardens—"the place to spend a happy day in."

"She's a wonderful woman," said Dolly.

"Unmitigated old dragon," growled Dorrien, joining in the conversation for the first time.

Dolly tried to cap the opprobrious epithet, but the words sank unspoken into his sky-blue slippers; for the colonel's grim sister was Dolly's especial terror, just as Dolly was her especial aversion, and the bare thoughts of her made him lose all presence of mind, just as the bare sight of him made her lose all patience. So Dolly got off the unpleasant subject as soon as soon as possible.

"No; the chief is, as you say, a hard fellow in the orderly

room and on parade, but he's had a lot of trouble, and I suppose that's had a good deal to say to it."

"Yes; what's that story about the Mutiny?" asked Garstang. "I've only a misty idea of it."

"You tell it, Dorrien. I'm such a bad hand at stories or explanation."

"Oh! fire away, Dolly. You tell it quite well enough," lazily replied Dorrien.

"Yes, go on, Dolly. I should like to hear it from *you*," said Garstang, at the same time turning his back to Dorrien. "By the way, excuse my calling you Dolly after knowing you for so short a time, but really it comes so naturally."

"All right," replied Dolly, "every one does it. Well, to make a long story as short as I can, it was just this :—When the Indian mutiny broke out, the regiment was quartered at, at—oh! some place ending in 'bad' or 'pore,' and the colonel was there with his wife and two children, little twin girls about three years old each."

"Don't be so confoundedly tautological, Dolly," growled Dorrien.

Dolly laughed and continued :—"There was a regular skedaddle of most of the native servants when the news of the rising reached the station, and one of the little girls disappeared, taken probably by her *ayah*—it may have been out of love for the child, or out of hatred and in a feeling of revenge towards the parents. Anyway, she was never heard of again, but there can't be much doubt as to what her end was. A white child in the midst of those bloodthirsty brutes would have had about as much chance as a lamb amongst a pack of wolves. The old chief took it terribly to heart; and as to Mrs. Belmont, what with this and her anxiety for her husband through the Mutiny and his being wounded, it altogether drove her mad, and she died before twelve months were out. This nearly broke the colonel up altogether, but he got over it in a way, though he has never been the same since; and when the regiment came

home, his sister, Miss Belmont, came and lived with him. All this has of course made him doubly fond of the daughter that was left, and when she's with him he's quite a different fellow. There, that's all I know of the story, and it's only what I've heard from the older hands who were in the regiment when it all happened."

"Yes, I saw the daughter when I called," said Garstang. "By Jove! sir, she fetched me uncommon! a devilish taking little thing, eh? Why do they call her 'Clive,' though? Queer name for a shemale. Should have thought 'Flossie,' or 'Tootsie,' or something in that style would have been more in her line."

Here the smoke from Dorrien's cigar curled furiously, and Dolly fidgeted about uncomfortably as he answered:

"Well, of course, properly speaking, it isn't a girl's name, but it seems to suit her very well; perhaps because we're accustomed to it. The colonel, you see, was a great admirer of Lord Clive's military genius; he has always been his favourite hero from boyhood—I have often heard him say so—and as the birth happened at a place in India where Clive had distinguished himself very much, the colonel determined beforehand upon calling the child 'Clive,' whatever it should be."

"A brace of girls must have sold him rather. Did he call them both Clive?" asked Garstang.

"No, I don't know what he called the other. That's the explanation I've always been given, and I know *I* think it's as pretty and soft a sounding name for a girl as any other I have ever heard," said Dolly, a little warmly for him.

Of course the name fell softly and prettily on Dolly's ears, and so would "Ipecacuanha," had the colonel's little daughter been so called.

"Oh! I wasn't saying anything against the name. 'The rose,' etc., etc. I only said I thought something in the popsy-wopsy style would have suited her better. She's a sort of little creature, you know," went on Garstang, uncon-

scious of the dangerous ground he was treading, "that it would be deuced nice, you know, to fondle and caress, and take on your knee, and all that sort of thing."

Dorrien rose slowly from his chair, and, seizing the poker, smashed a lump of coal to atoms with a vicious blow. Then in very deliberate tones he observed:

"Your remarks concerning Miss Belmont are really so flattering to that young lady that I should recommend your keeping them for her father, who, as her nearest and dearest relative, would doubtless be gratified by your condescension. At all events, they are not appreciated by your present audience."

The speaker was very cool, and as he stood on the hearth-rug looking contemptuously down on the other in his chair, an unpleasant conviction, bringing increase of hatred with it, forced itself upon Garstang that he, Garstang, was the inferior animal of the two. He felt he was being looked down upon in every sense of the expression. However, he quite equalled his adversary in self-possession and coolness, as he replied:

"Captain Dorrien appears to have constituted himself, I know not on what grounds, so zealous a guardian of Miss Belmont that I should have thought anything concerning her which would have been gratifying to her father would have been equally so to him."

When people wish to bite each other's noses off, they are very fond of doing it in the third person singular.

"Captain Garstang is perfectly right. Colonel Belmont's gratification at Captain Garstang's remarks would doubtless lead him into a very warm acknowledgment—so warm probably as to be unpleasant; and I candidly admit that they have the same effect upon me."

"Captain Dorrien is perfectly at liberty to make the warmest acknowledgment in his power, which, I can only assure him, will be met with equal warmth on my part."

"Come, I say, do let's drop the subject," said Dolly, who,

for him, had been looking quite bellicose a few moments before, but had now relapsed into his normal condition of good-nature.

"Well, I certainly shall," said Dorrien; "I've had enough of it. Good night, Dolly." And Dorrien walked out of the room without taking any notice of the other.

I should here like to tell the reader that a "dangerous light," or a "light which boded no good," or at all events a light of some sort came into Garstang's eyes; but I have consulted an eminent oculist who assures me that this is all an ocular delusion, and that the only way of bringing a light into a person's eye is to hit him there violently with your fist, or get him to cut a star on the ice with the back of his head. As both these courses are impracticable here, I can merely record that Garstang looked angry and indulged in some strong language *sotto voce*. He then took his departure.

"I didn't half like the fellow's remarks either," muttered Dolly, as soon as he was by himself. "But I dare say he didn't mean what he said, and I rather felt for him afterwards, though I was nearly going at him myself at first. Dorrien has got such a cool insulting way with him when he doesn't like a person. I wish he wouldn't; it always makes me feel uncomfortable, particularly in one's own quarters."

Before turning in, Dolly took up his album, and gazing sentimentally on a certain photograph, proceeded to pump up a series of deep-drawn sighs from the very soles of his sky-blue slippers.

A tap on the thin partition between the quarters disturbed his fond reverie.

"Try a nip of something, Dolly, old man," said the occupant of the next room in sleepy but sympathetic tones. "It's that infernal mess sherry. I've got a touch of it myself, rather."

"There's no romance about Miller," said Dolly, as he closed the album with a subdued sigh, and proceeded to divest himself of his gorgeous attire.

## CHAPTER II.

### SYMPATHY.

THE following day, after luncheon, Dolly Jones arrayed himself with even more than his usual splendour. His shirt, where it emerged into view at the neck and wristbands, was plentifully besprinkled with mauve dots, and reflected equal credit on the calico-printer, the maker, and the laundress. His tie was a silk one of the regimental cricketing colours, scarlet, yellow, and black, and was slipped through a massive gold snake with a turquoise head. His suit of dittoes fitted faultlessly, and the pattern was so bold in design that Dolly's legs barely afforded it full scope. Finally, the tuft of hair on his chin was shiny with that beautiful gloss which, according to the label, it was in the power of one Rowland, and no other, to impart to it.

No man ever thinks himself plain from the top of his head down to the ground, no matter how strongly his acquaintances may hold that he is. They may be unable to catch a single redeeming beauty, but he will find out a strong point somewhere. The fancied and cherished power of fascination may lie in the straightness of the legs, in the wave of the hair, in the eye—like Mr. Sim Tappertit—or in the gait ; or it may lurk in the nose, in the whiskers, in the back of the head even, but it is sure to be found out somewhere. Now, Dolly was not by any means handsome, though it was a pleasant enough face to look at, but any powers of fasci-

nation he believed himself to possess he attributed to his "imperial." His whiskers had been a lamentable failure, his moustaches had but ill requited the money and pains lavished upon them, but *it* had not disappointed him. It was doubly dear to him, too, for, like stolen kisses, he had no right to it. It was not only "a grace snatched beyond the rules of art," but also beyond the rules of the service; for "imperials," or "charleys," or whatever they may be termed, are abominations in the sight of commanding officers, and directly against all regulations. Luckily for Dolly, his "imperial" was of a dubious shade, the colonel's eyes were dim, and the cherished appendage had hitherto escaped official notice.

Having given one last fond look at it in the glass, Dolly emerged from his hut, resplendent in his attire, but somewhat faltering in spirit. For was he not bidden to Colonel Belmont's to play croquet, listen to the band, and drink tea, and to do all this was it not by turns to expand and grow radiant in the sunshine of bright little Clive Belmont's winning ways, and to shiver and droop under the icy influence of her aunt's austere manners? The one was like the flower-scented breezes of summer, the other like the chill icy blasts of December. Not entirely, though, to the anticipations of these counteractions were to be attributed the flutterings and sinkings of the heart he experienced as he started on this particular day. There was something else in the wind which was making him feel nervous, and this was a recently-formed determination to speak his mind out, should an opportunity offer, to Clive Belmont on a certain subject on which there is no occasion to enlighten the intelligent reader. So unpleasant and discomposing did these flutterings become that at last Dolly stepped round by the mess and had a large glass of brown sherry, just by way of steadying himself a bit. Here his little peculiarities in dress brought much good-humoured "chaff" on his head, and there was a great deal of "How much for the tie, Dolly?" "I'll have your mauve

shirt!" etc. Unheeding, Dolly gulped down his sherry and hurried away. So precious did he hold the anticipated moments that he would not even wait for Dorrien or any of his brother-officers, but started off as if his tight varnished boots had been seven-leagued. He had not ordered his dog-cart. He thought he could collect his thoughts better as he walked.

The colonel's house was about a mile and a half from the camp, and long before he had accomplished that distance the effects of the brown sherry had waned, and he experienced a severe relapse of the flutterings and sinkings. Of course Dolly had never been taken so badly before, but, as I have already said, he was about to take a bold plunge—it might be into bliss, it might be into misery—and the contemplation of either the one or the other was quite enough to make his heart leap to his mouth with joy or sink into his boots with despair. After doing first one and then the other, it at last, on Dolly's coming in view of the house, varied the proceedings by turning a complete back somersault, for there on the croquet lawn, all by itself, was the small object of Dolly's affections.

On descrying his approach, the small figure tripped down to the gate and gave him a laughing welcome.

"How de do, Dolly? you're always the first. Oh! by-the-by, I'm not to call you Dolly any more; one quite forgets one's age. It's very improper."

"Why, if you were to call me anything but Dolly it would sound so strange; I should fancy you had quarrelled with me, Clive."

"Oh! there again. We're not to have any more 'Clives' either. No more 'Dollies' and 'Clives' and all that sort of thing, Aunt Smack says. I'm to be 'Miss Belmont' in future, if you please."

"I'm sure I shan't be able to do it all at once, Clive. After knowing you ever since you came up to my knee——"

"Never mind where I came up to. When people get

on the subject of my height they generally become impertinent."

"Well, I was going to say, after having known you as a child——"

"Yes, that's the worst of having been brought up in the regiment. It's impossible to keep up one's dignity amongst people who have distinct recollections of you in a pinbefore and a jammy mouth. By the way, have some toffee. It's my own making. Look where I burnt my finger trying to see if it was cool when it wasn't!"

Here Clive held up a tiny finger for sympathy. How Dolly longed to kiss the place to make it well! And so he would have done a year or two before; but, alas! for Dolly's peace of mind, times had lately changed, and he could no longer look upon Clive as a child. Conquering the inclination to seize the little pink finger and carry it to his lips, Dolly took the proffered piece of toffee instead, and, though it went very badly with the brown sherry, ate it with considerable zest as being her manufacture, and even thought, with a rapturous glow, that he detected a delicious flavour of burnt Clive in it.

"Never do anything in a hurry, Dolly, not even——oh! I see the habit is too deeply rooted to be overcome all at once. It must be done by degrees. We'll be Dolly and Clive for to-day, to-morrow we'll be Mr. Dolly and Miss Clive, and the day after Miss Belmont and Mr. Jones. I was going to say, never do anything in a hurry, not even making toffee. I hope you'll never marry in a hurry, Dolly. That's the worst thing of all to be in a hurry about."

Dolly immediately put his hand to the tuft on his chin. What a hat is to a shy man paying a visit, what that historical waistcoat button was to Sir Walter Scott's schoolfellow, that was Dolly's tuft to Dolly. He gathered inspiration from it, and what it said now was, "Now's your time, Dolly. That's an opening. People will begin to arrive soon; speak up."

"Clive," he began, with such tenderness in his tones that she became quite concerned, and asked him if the toffee had disagreed with him.

"No, I liked it because you made it. But never mind the toffee, Clive. You said you hoped I'd never marry in a hurry. Would you call it being in a hurry if I wanted to marry some one I had known from childhood—some one I had loved for years and felt I could never be happy without? Would you call that marrying in a hurry, Clive?"

"Dear me, Dolly, I never heard you talk so beautifully before. I do believe you're contemplating matrimony."

"You're quite right. I am."

A merry ringing laugh followed the announcement.

"Do forgive me, Dolly; it's very rude to laugh, I know, but it does seem so funny to think of you as a married man; you must keep up your dignity, Dolly. But now I'll be quite serious, I promise you, and listen to all about it. Go on, Dolly."

The laugh had been rather disconcerting, and Dolly stammered and stuttered and blushed so that Clive at last came to his rescue. "There now, I see you're shy and embarrassed. I'll meet you half-way with something I've got to tell you, and then perhaps, after I've given you a lead, you'll have a little more courage to go on with your part of the business. Women have always more *savoir faire* than men in matters of delicacy, I think."

Dolly's soul was in a delicious tumult. He tried to divide 1870 by 4 to see whether it was leap-year; but he was not in a condition for mental arithmetic. "Meet you half-way!" What frank ingenuousness! what charming *naïveté!* what delicate consideration! what confiding simplicity! In Clive it was all these. In any other girl it would have been rank boldness.

"Dolly," said Clive, softly, "you've always been so kind and good to me. I've played more tricks upon you than on any one else, and you've never said a hasty or unkind word

to me. I've rubbed your hats the wrong way, stuck paper tails behind your coat, put ripe mulberries on your chair for you to sit on, and sometimes even pins—horrid little wretch that I was——"

"I didn't mind it," said Dolly; "I liked it."

"Yes, I know you were always so kind and good-natured when I deserved instead a good scolding or a whipping. I'd do anything for you, Dolly, and now I'm going to prove my friendship by making you my confidant. I'm going to be married, Dolly. At least, that's to say, I'm engaged. And to whom do you think?"

Poor Dolly! the very colour seem to fade out of his red and yellow tie, and the very tassel of his cane to droop dejectedly. Despite though his gorgeous tie, his jewelled fingers, and his tasselled cane, the spirit of the Spartan boy drawing his cloak around him was in his words and manner as he said quietly:

"I see it makes you very happy, Clive, and I am glad to hear it. Whom to?"

"Guess, Dolly!"

"I can't. I never guessed anything in my life, not even the easiest thing, and this is the hardest I've ever had put to me."

"To your friend, Captain Dorrien."

"Dorrien?" gasped Dolly.

"Yes, to your great friend, Captain Dorrien. That's the best of it, Dolly. Why, it will be next door to marrying you."

"Yes, with the walls separating happiness and misery," said Dolly.

The bitter words had escaped him almost unconsciously, and he felt sorry for having spoken them.

"That's rather good for you, Dolly. It's lucky that young lady you were going to confide to me about couldn't overhear that pretty speech. Why don't you laugh at your own joke, Dolly? Those are generally the first jokes people laugh at."

Dolly laughed a laugh, but an acrobat's smile was a hearty roar compared to it. It sounded like an unsuccessful effort of ventriloquism.

"Dear me, how deadly pale you look, Dolly. What's the matter? Don't you feel well, dear old Dolly?"

"Oh, dear! yes," murmured Dolly, "I never felt better in all my life. But I've quite forgotten to congratulate you. May every happiness be yours, Clive. I'm sure you deserve it. I had not the remotest idea that Dorrien was thinking of anything of the sort, and you nearly took my breath away with the news. You will have a strong will and a strong arm to protect you through life, Clive," said Dolly, looking down very tenderly, and trying hard in his foolish but generous heart to find consolation in the thought that her happiness would be much safer in Dorrien's than in his keeping.

"I would sooner it were to Dorrien," he continued, "than to any one else I ever came across. I know him better than any other man in the regiment."

"Yes, I never could quite make out why you and he are such great friends, Dolly, for never were two natures more opposite. He is such a determined, clever fellow, and——"

"And I am such a weak vacillating fool," groaned Dolly. "I suppose that's what you were going to say, Clive."

"No, no, indeed I wasn't," said Clive, warmly. "I wasn't going to say anything of the sort. You're only vacillating in trifles, Dolly, when it doesn't matter a pin's head which course you take. You might be ten minutes deciding whether to wear a blue or a yellow tie, but if, for instance, I tumbled into the water fifty feet deep, you wouldn't be two seconds in making up your mind to jump in after me, would you?"

"That I wouldn't, Clive."

"But, by the way, you can't swim, can you, Dolly?"

"Not a stroke."

"Then it would be a very foolish proceeding on your

part, for two people would then be drowned instead of one, and I've been rather unfortunate in my illustration. But what I meant to say is, that you might be vacillating where it doesn't matter a bit if you are; but in a serious case, if right and wrong lay clearly defined before you, you'd be like iron, Dolly, I know you would, you're so good-hearted."

Dolly didn't feel comfortable. He was not accustomed to be congratulated on his iron nature, and he changed the subject.

"When is it to be?" he asked.

"Well, I can't exactly say. It's not to be given out. You're the only one who has been told. Papa and Aunt Smack say that I'm not quite old enough to know my own mind, which is all nonsense of course, for if one can't know one's own mind at seventeen and a half when will one, I should like to know? Besides, what woman could ever be in two minds about Studholme Dorrien, if he only gave her the chance? I'm sure I never dreamt of his proposing. Such a thing never entered my head, and I felt I could only worship him in secret and from a respectful distance. And when he did propose, I was overwhelmed with the honour. Of course, Dolly, I look upon you as a big brother, and tell you all this. You don't know what a delightful thing it is to love with one's whole heart and soul a man one can look up to."

Vivisection was pleasant tickling compared to Dolly's feelings.

"Really, Dolly, you must give up wearing those killing ties. They make you look positively green."

He smiled feebly. He smiled as Mr. Winkle smiled when his skates were forcibly taken off by Mr. Pickwick's orders.

"What a selfish creature I am! Here I've been running on with my own affairs while you've been bursting to launch out into raptures about your own little tale of love. I've given you the lead. It's your turn now. Go on, Dolly.

You can't think what a tender, sympathising little confidant I shall be. Come, Dolly, tell us all about her. What coloured hair and eyes has she got? What's her real name, and what's your pet name for her? Is she big or little? I'm dying to hear it all, and I am ready to love her as a sister. Come, Dolly, you'll make me fancy I'm very bold if you're coy after my lead."

She almost nestled her head against his arm as she spoke, and looked up with an arch, coaxing expression.

He gazed in every direction but down into the winning, upturned little face. He could not trust himself.

"It's not worth talking about, Clive."

"Not worth talking about! That's a nice way to speak of such a serious matter. That's a pretty sentiment for an engaged man, indeed! Upon my word, Dolly, I'm afraid you don't fully realise the awful responsibility of matrimony. I declare if the girl heard you, she'd be quite justified in breaking it off on the spot. If you don't tell me all about it, I shall consider you've wormed my secret out of me under false pretences. You distinctly told me you were contemplating matrimony, and when you said so you were serious enough, you know you were."

"I ought to have said 'I *had* been.' There's nothing to tell, Clive. It's off."

"Off!"

"Yes, broken off."

"Broken off! Why or wherefore, I should like to know? Why, Dolly, why? I must and shall have a reason. And recollect you're not Falstaff. Why was it broken off?"

"Incompatibility of temper," stammered the wretched Dolly, fairly "cornered."

"Well, that is a funny discovery to make beforehand! People generally wait to do that until afterwards, when it's too late. Besides, incompatibility of temper, indeed! Why, Dolly, you'd get on with Aunt Smack, or that old scold who

led that old philosopher in the tub such a life. Who was it, Dolly?"

"Xantippe, I think," said Dolly, not sorry that the conversation was taking a turn in a new direction, and hailing the old termagant as a deliverer.

"Oh! yes, so it was. Well, I'm sure *his* Aunt Tippy was a joke to *my* Aunt Smack, and yet you'd get on with *her*. Incompatibility of temper, indeed! I hate strong language, Dolly, but I must say 'Fiddle-de-dee!' I know what it was; I see through it all. It was a vile excuse for throwing you over. I hate her, Dolly; she's a reptile."

"Please don't let us pursue the subject any farther," said Dolly, piteously.

"Yes, I will though," said Clive, with flushed cheeks. "She's a reptile of the deepest dye. I like you too much, Dolly, not to feel indignant at your being treated so. It's very generous and noble of you, and only what I should expect from you, to defend her, no matter how she behaved. But she's a heartless, deceitful creature, whoever she is—there! Never mind, Dolly, she's not worthy of you. I know now what made you look so pained and distressed several times while we've been talking on these subjects. Poor dear old Dolly, my heart bleeds for you, because I know what I should feel if Stud Dorrien were to treat me like that. Oh, dear! the very thoughts of it——oh, what a nuisance! Here's Aunt Smack."

A tall, gaunt figure, in a skirt as scant as was consistent with decency and freedom of limb, stalked down the lawn, carrying a croquet mallet like a battle-axe. It was Miss Macnamara Belmont, *alias* (before her face) "Aunt Mac," *alias* (behind her back) "Aunt Smack." This last sobriquet was an invention of Clive's infancy, the application being obvious.

She was a grim-looking female with nothing soft about her, and with her mallet over her shoulder she looked much more like felling an ox than playing croquet.

There was a tradition in the regiment that the iron-gray curls which clustered in two tight little bunches at each side of her head were steel shavings obtained from Woolwich Arsenal.

For the first time in his life, Dolly was glad to see the strong-minded, formidable personage. The *tête-à-tête* with Clive was painful.

Without a shadow of a smile on her hard face, Aunt Smack strode up to Dolly, lifted her arm from the elbow with the rigidity of a railway semaphore, extended two fingers and snapped out "doo." This was her pleasant way of greeting people. Dolly was very polite, and thankfully receiving the small contribution of fingers, replied:

"Very well, I thank you, Miss Belmont. How do *you* do?"

Aunt Smack deigned no reply, and, instead of saying how she did, grimly proceeded to survey Dolly from head to foot. As her eyes rested in turn on the gorgeous tie, the watch-chain, festooned over the waistcoat and weighty with lockets and charms, the loud pattern, and the jewelled fingers, she gave a series of expressive taps on the ground with her croquet mallet, and finally wound up with an impatient grunt.

Never had she been so marked in her disapprobation of Dolly, but then never had he been so resplendent as on this occasion.

During the trying ordeal he stood, as was his wont when in difficulties, endeavouring to get an idea out of the tuft on his chin. But he scratched in vain.

Now this tuft was Aunt Smack's especial aversion, and the sight of Dolly caressing it was the last straw which broke the back of her even temper.

"Pray, Mr. Jones, would you think it rude if I asked you which it is your ambition to resemble—a billy-goat, the pantaloon in a pantomime, the Emperor Napoleon, or a Bashibazouk?"

"Well, really, Miss Belmont," said Dolly, flushing and stammering, "I—I——"

He stopped. He could not be rude to a woman. It went against his grain, like raising his hand to one.

Clive came gallantly to his rescue.

"Yes, he does think it rude of you to ask, only he's too much of a gentleman to say so. So would any one think it rude. *I* do—awfully rude." Then, in a stage whisper to Dolly, "That's one to us, Dolly. *We* scored that time."

Aunt Smack shot a savage glance which said plainly, "I heard you, you little minx," and which was met by another which said quite as plainly, "I don't care if you did."

"How much better one can fight for other people than for one's self," said Clive, as her aunt walked contemptuously away from adversaries she deemed unworthy of her steel. "It was all for you, Dolly, that I took up the cudgels then. It made me so wild to see how rude she was. Why didn't you go at her?"

"Why, what could I do, Clive? One can't bandy words with a lady, no matter how she behaves, and even if I were to, she'd soon knock me into a cocked-hat at that game."

"Well, but, Dolly, you might have kept up your position by making a face or a snook. You *might* have made a snook, Dolly. I really think that much was due to yourself as a lord of the creation. I know *I* should if any one were to plant themselves in front of me and stare and grunt in that rude way right in my face. Now I wonder if I can leave you two together without you making frantic love to each other! Don't trifle with her young, untried affections, Dolly, in my absence. I must go and see what papa is about."

So saying, Clive disappeared through a French window, and left Dolly to ponder with an aching heart over what had been told him.

"Mr. Jones, if you are not exclusively for ornament, and it will not in any way disarrange your dress, or damage your jewellery, or put your moustache in the wrong place (don't

know what you call it) out of curl, I should be much obliged if you would set up my hoops for me over there," said Miss Macnamara Belmont from a rustic garden seat. "I am going to play a match with the Reverend Mr. Slink, and the laughter and conversation here may distract our attention. I should be much obliged to you if you would."

Extraordinary though she might be, Miss Macnamara Belmont was at times very commonplace—she could be civil when she wanted anything done. It may also appear that in the matter of croquet she descended somewhat from that high level line, far above the frivolities of the world, along which she travelled. But not so. She did not descend to croquet. She raised it to herself. Her game was a very severe order of croquet, in which everything light and amusing was left out, and everything disagreeable and hard put in.

Had Miss Macnamara Belmont played marbles, she would not have appeared frivolous. That youthful game would have at once assumed a grim and imposing aspect, and in her mouth, "Knuckle down tight" would have become a phrase of grave import.

Dolly good-naturedly expressed his readiness, and, retiring to the spot indicated by "over there," proceeded to fix the small hoops, to get a ball through which was more a feat of conjuring than of croquet. His heart was not in his work, and by the time he had completed his task the grounds about Colonel Belmont's house had undergone a change for the livelier. The regimental band had arrived and taken up its position. Sundry carriages and dog-carts had also arrived, and the muslins, silks, and soft voices of the first were now amalgamating kindly on the lawn with the tweeds, billy-cocks, and gruff notes of the other. Towering above them all, like a stately old man-o'-war in the midst of a fleet of pleasure craft, was Colonel Belmont, grizzled and stern of countenance. To continue the nautical simile, I should add, "and with one of his spars

shot away." His right sleeve was empty, and pinned against his breast. A bullet from a mutinous sepoy's musket had done the mischief.

While Miss Belmont, with her semaphoric fore-arm, her smileless face, and her spasmodic "doo," was going the round of the visitors, Dolly joined the gay throng, and proceeded to enact with but indifferent success the trying part of hiding an aching heart under a merry countenance. We are all cast for it on life's stage at some time or another, and know what an uphill part it is to play.

Dorrien had evidently not arrived, and Clive was being monopolised by Captain Garstang, at whom numerous young subalterns looked with jealous eyes; for it was the first duty of a young gentleman on joining the regiment to fall in love with and adore his colonel's daughter in secret. They never told their love, and Clive, though she often reproved them sharply for staring, and ordered them about like slaves, lived in calm ignorance of the number of blighted young hearts around her.

On seeing Dolly, she abruptly left Captain Garstang in the middle of a soft speech.

"Do deliver me out of the clutches of this new man, Dolly. I can't bear him. He's so familiar, and there's no shaking him off. He has such a disagreeable way, too, of looking at me as if I were an oyster and he wanted to swallow me. I should beg to disagree with him if he did; that would be some consolation. There goes Aunt Smack with the little parson. I do so hope she'll get beaten, for being so rude to you, Dolly. It's my opinion he could beat her easily, but he's afraid to; I believe that's the secret of half her victories—people are afraid to win."

"Now, upon my word, Miss Belmont," said Captain Garstang, coming up with a free-and-easy smile on his good-looking but "slangy" face, "it's very unkind of you, leaving a fellow in the lurch like that—in the middle of such a pretty speech, too."

"Our ideas on what is pretty don't agree, then, Captain Garstang."

"Don't they? I think they do on one point, that's to say, if you have any of your sex's vanity, and ever look in the glass, Miss Belmont, and you know that great authority on human nature, Shakspeare, says that 'there never was a woman but she made mouths in the glass.' He might have put it a little nicer, but he was coarse sometimes, was Billy—deuced coarse."

"You have studied him deeply then, I suppose, Captain Garstang," said Clive with a quiet significance.

"Ha! ha! we must have our little joke, eh? No, I can't say I ever studied him; never studied any book in my life except my betting-book. But I have a tolerable acquaintance with William, all the same. Fact was, once in India, couldn't get to sleep at nights for the heat and the mosquitoes. Tried everything to set one's self off. Brandy couldn't do it, but Shakspeare did. There was a fellow in my old regiment used to spout him by the yard—when he was allowed, which he never was. Bright thought struck me—use him as a soporific. Get him into my room at nights, and let him turn on the tap there. He jumped at it. Hadn't had a listener for about two years. Came in every night as soon as I was in bed, and used to spout like mad. Never failed to get me off within the hour, and I used to go to sleep with indistinct visions of his apostrophising my bath-sponge, which was doing duty as 'poor Yorick's' skull, or pinking that talkative old beggar Polonius under my camp-bed with my regulation sword. I couldn't help picking up something from him——"

"How 'to turn the tap on,' I suppose, Captain Garstang."

"There you are, at it again. Ha! ha! very good, though. No, I didn't mean that. I meant picking up something that flowed from the tap, and I was quite surprised to find that I had been talking Shakspeare half my

life without knowing it. For instance, now, for years I had often expressed my scepticism by the forcible rejoinder 'very like a whale,' without in the least knowing that I was indebted to the genius of the immortal William for the figure of speech. But to hark back, Miss Belmont, we *do* agree on that one point we started from, don't we? and you *do* look in the glass sometimes, don't you?"

There was an irritating familiarity in his manner, and a bold admiration in his gaze, which sent the blood to Clive's cheeks, and to Dolly's as well.

Her flushed face only made Garstang stare more admiringly, and he looked and laughed as though saying:

"That's right; it becomes you amazingly. Pray fly into a towering passion, and you'll be perfectly bewitching."

The irrepressibility of the man was exasperating, and Clive, as she afterwards told Dolly, felt as if she "must either scratch or cry."

Luckily she did neither, but merely looked appealingly at her old friend to come to her rescue.

I have said before that Dolly gathered, or at all events sought, inspiration from his "imperial." Each individual hair of that cherished appendage was now charged to its very tip with virtuous indignation. He opened his mouth, and was about to deliver himself of probably the severest remark that had ever dropped from it, when, like winter's icy blast, Miss Macnamara Belmont swept past, and nipped his flower of speech in the bud.

"Popinjay! senseless popinjay!" snapped out Aunt Smack, as she passed on her way to her brother, to whom she subsequently confided her firm belief that "that thing Jones was under the influence of liquor, for no man but a drunken one could have arranged her hoops as he had done."

"There, Captain Garstang, if you want to see any one look pretty in a rage, you had better follow my aunt," said Clive; and, so saying, she turned on her heel and walked

away with the greatest amount of dignity at the command of about five feet just out of short petticoats.

Accompanied by Dolly, who wore quite a severe expression of countenance, Clive sailed away under the impression that she had at last crushed Captain Garstang; but had she glanced behind she would have seen him, to her intense mortification, looking very much tickled and amused.

"What a fetching little beggar it is with its airs and graces!" he said. "Holloa!" (and here the amused expression gave way to a scowl) "here's that bumptious brute Dorrien with that intensified quiet swagger of his, as if the whole place belonged to him and we had all assembled in his honour. I should have thought a conceited ass like him would have gone in for being above croquet parties. By Jove! little Miss Cheeky seems to be on good terms with him."

There was a fascination in watching the two which Garstang could not withstand, and his eyes were perpetually following Clive's movements. She strolled about with Dorrien, and once they passed Garstang she gave him a glance which intimated, "Come up with one of your familiar speeches now, if you dare."

That discretion which is the better part of valour whispered to Captain Garstang that he had better not accept the challenge.

## CHAPTER III.

### ACCOMMODATION.

AFTER parade the following morning, instead of as usual repairing to the ante-room in the companionship of his brother officers, Dolly hastened away to the solitude of his hut, where he could indulge in sweet melancholy, undisturbed by the mess-room laughter and conversation.

"I don't always mean to go in for the 'blighted being' sort of business, but just at first one must give one's feelings a little play, you know," thought Dolly, as he shut the door and threw off his jacket. A popular man in a regiment, however, has little chance of giving his feelings play in solitude, as Dolly put it, and he had just commenced the operation by donning the smoking coat bound with sky-blue, and lighting up a cigar, when the door was opened and Dorrien entered.

"Well, Dolly, so Clive told you all about it, eh?"

"Yes, and let me congratulate you with all my heart, old fellow," said Dolly, holding out his hand.

Strictly speaking, "felicitate" would have been the proper word for him to have used. He could wish Dorrien joy and happiness from the bottom of his heart, but he could not share his joy, could not rejoice with him.

"Thank you, old boy, and now let me express my sympathy. I stayed and dined at the colonel's after that croquet arrangement, and Clive told me all about your long

talk together. Why didn't you confide in me, old fellow? I might have given you some advice, and saved you from being thrown over by a wanton, designing flirt. I give you every credit, though, for being able to keep a thing dark. How, when, or where all this has been going on beats me, for you've hardly ever been away. Why, you wouldn't even take your last winter's leave, I recollect, and made every one think you were going mad. I never heard of the British subaltern giving up his leave before. You might as well expect a school-boy to prefer school to holidays."

This was quite true. Dolly had thrown up his leave in order to continue living in that atmosphere of bliss he breathed when within visiting distance of Clive Belmont.

"By Jove! Dolly, you *have* been a dark horse. I had no idea you were such a deep one."

"Well, to tell you the truth, I'm thinking much the same of you, Dorrien. Such a thing as you being engaged to Clive Belmont never entered my head."

"Well, I don't know that it did mine until very lately. I never thought my heart a particularly soft one, but she seems to have crept into it so easily that I hardly knew anything about it until it was all over. I think it must have been because she was so small. Well, it's just this, Dolly. I'm tired of trumpeting and braying about the country for the benefit of admiring servant-maids and school-girls, or being bucketed about for the amusement of a few old fossils in cocked-hats playing at battles, or being turned upside down by civilian dabblers in army reform, and all these constitute the whole duty of British soldiers nowadays. It's like constantly rehearsing for a play which you know will never come off. The only fights we have any experience of are barrack-room 'grog-fights.' The only wound I've ever received in the cause of my country during my glorious career, was from an old woman's stocking with a stone in the heel of it at an Irish election, and I candidly confess that my face was not turned to the foe on that occasion.

*Jam satis.* I shall retire on my well-earned laurels, and Clive shall share my peaceful home, where I needn't tell you, I am sure, there will always be a double welcome for you. She's as fond of you almost as I am, and that's saying a great deal. Of course you'll be 'best man,' won't you, old fellow, whenever the happy event takes place?"

It was not very wicked of Dolly to reply, as he did, that he should be very happy; but all the same, it was about as deep a plunge into perjury as any man could take.

"That's right. That preliminary's settled. But there's another one which may be less easily arranged. I've got a couple of days' leave from the colonel, and am off up to town to see my uncle. The old boy doesn't know it as yet, and I think it's time to tell him. I haven't the slightest idea whether it will be a case of 'bless you, my children,' or the reverse. But as far as the course of events is concerned, it doesn't much matter what line he takes. I've chalked out my own and I shall follow it. You had better come up with me. It will be better for you than moping down here."

"No, thanks, Dorrien. I'll have a quiet ride by myself in the country."

"Nonsense. A quiet ride means a quiet mope. Cheer up. There are as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it. You're well rid of her, old fellow, I can assure you. Clive told me all about that flimsy pretext of incompatibility of temper. The woman might have chosen an excuse without a palpable lie on the surface. Come, she's not worth fretting about. We'll run up to town together and dine at my uncle's. The old boy has got some first-rate liquor, and we'll drink to the confusion of this damsel."

"No, I'd sooner remain down here," replied Dolly.

"Well, please yourself, I must be off. By the way, I nearly forgot all about it. Here's a note from Clive; she would insist on writing it before I left last night." And Dorrien threw a note on the table and hurried off.

The envelope was not allowed to remain very long

unbroken, and Dolly read, prolonging the pleasure as much as possible by spelling through every word.

"DEAR OLD DOLLY,

"In the midst of all my happiness your face, so miserable and unhappy as I saw it to-day, keeps rising up before me, and I feel as if I must scribble off a few words to try and say something kind and cheering. Perhaps I didn't appear half sympathising enough to-day, but I was so surprised that I hardly realised what you had told me, or rather what I had found out myself. We women, Dolly, have sharp eyes for that sort of thing, and I read you this afternoon like a spelling-book story in one syllable. The more I think of that odious creature's conduct the more detestable it appears to me. You are the last person in this world to go falling in love—I've not known you all these years not to be able to see that with my eyes closed—and I know what an artful, designing creature she must have been, and how she must have encouraged and drawn you on just to gratify her vanity and swell her list of conquests. She is totally unworthy of you, Dolly, and when you look at her conduct from this point you ought to be able to cast her aside without a sigh. This may be hard counsel to follow just at first, for on these occasions I suppose people will keep thinking of their shattered idols, not as the worthless clay they have found them out to be, but as the refined, pure gold they once thought them. But keep her in your mind from the former point of view, Dolly, and you will soon cease to trouble yourself about her. Try and love some one worthy of you, and until you meet this some one let me offer you all the solace that can be found in the warm-hearted and affectionate friendship of your old tease and tormentor,

"CLIVE BELMONT."

As Dolly read, he could not help smiling with a ghastly

sense of the ridiculous at Clive's self-supposed sharpness, and all the virtuous indignation wasted on this heartless jilt of her own imagination.

"Bless her kindly little heart," said Dolly fervently, and he was just raising the letter to his lips when Garstang suddenly entered, and he scratched his nose with the corner of the envelope instead.

"I say, Dolly, old man, what are you up to this afternoon? I was thinking whether you couldn't suggest some way of getting hold of the little Belmont filly, and taking her out for a walk or a drive. You seem pretty thick there —friend of her childhood and all that sort of thing—and perhaps you might be able to manage it. There's something about the little beggar that fetches me uncommonly. Of course, all that snubbing she gives me I take for what it's meant. It's only the very natural coquetry of a young girl brought up in a regiment all her life; and, you know, a woman's 'Oh, don't!' always means 'Oh, do!'"

At this point Dolly's indignation at last found words to express itself.

"Look here, Garstang, I'm an easy-going sort of a fellow. I'm naturally so. I don't recollect ever having a fight at school, but I can't, and, what's more, *shan't* allow you to speak in this way of Miss Belmont, whom I've known, as you say, from childhood, and know to be one of the most simple-minded and pure girls who ever breathed. There is no coquetry whatever in her, and if she showed a dislike to you, you may depend upon it she felt it. And I don't wonder at it, for I consider your manner towards her yesterday was extremely offensive and impertinent."

It was far from Garstang's object to quarrel with Dolly. He felt that he was not popular in the corps, and at once saw how much worse his position would be if his brother-officers should be able to point to him and say, "That's the only man Dolly Jones was ever known to quarrel with." There was another consideration, too, prompting him to

speak the soft word which would turn away the other's wrath.

"I assure you, my dear fellow, I meant nothing disrespectful in my remarks about Miss Belmont. Surely you can't have been in the service all these years without knowing that a young lady may be spoken of as a 'filly' or 'fetching little beggar' without any intentional disrespect. It's a slangy, careless way of talking, if you like, but still it's a habit very easily picked up, and not so easily dropped when speaking on subjects which, perhaps, deserve rather more guarded language."

Garstang spoke in his softest and most conciliatory tones, and Dolly was not the man to nurse his wrath. Before the apology was half concluded, it had vanished, to his great relief, for to him the sensation of quarrelling was as unpleasant as it was novel.

Peace and harmony having been restored, Garstang wisely avoided the dangerous ground he had just been treading, and led the subject on to horse-racing and betting. He had an object in view. On his first introduction to his new regiment he had noted with inward satisfaction that, combined with the reputation of being one of the most moneyed men of the regiment, Dolly possessed a simplicity and good nature which at once marked him out as a useful friend in emergency. The emergency had now arisen, and rather sooner than Garstang had anticipated. He had lately had a run of ill luck on the turf. "Straight tips" had gone crooked, "good things" had failed to "come off," as likewise had sundry "certainties" and "morals," and altogether the case was desperate. If fifteen hundred pounds were not at his command in a few days, he would be posted at Tattersall's. It is not the pleasantest thing in the world asking a man to put his name to a bill, but it was not the first time by many that Garstang had found it necessary to do so during his betting career, and there was not much time wasted in beating about the bush. The moment was as

propitious a one as could have presented itself. Dolly, as is the case with easy-going, generous natures after an unwonted outburst of wrath, was quite on the alert to make amends for the words spoken in anger. They had been spoken, too, in his own room, and Dolly held the most exalted opinion on the duties of a host, even if he were only doing the honours of an Aldershot hut ten feet square. Garstang was not slow in perceiving and taking advantage of this.

"Dolly, old man, you wouldn't mind, I suppose, obliging a friend—not an old one to be sure, but there may be friendship as well as love at first sight, and I don't mind telling you I took to you from the first moment I laid eyes on you."

This was quite true. Dolly had been pointed out to him as one of "the rich Joneses" the first time he had seen him.

Of course, Dolly had no objection—on the contrary, he had every desire to oblige a friend; and the outcome of the following quarter of an hour's conversation was Dolly's signature to a bill, "just as a mere matter of form," of course. It always is at first.

"Thank you, old man, for the accommodation, 'which,' as Bardolph says, 'is an excellent thing.' That's the best bit of Shakspeare I know, quite a little gem in its way," said Garstang, as he gaily pocketed the document.

## CHAPTER IV.

### POSITION AND OPPOSITION.

On arriving at Waterloo Station, Dorrien drove straight to No. —, Berkeley Square, the town residence, as Debrett informed the world, of Lord Todmorden. Lord Todmorden was Dorrien's uncle, and Dorrien was Lord Todmorden's heir-presumptive. You might have gathered as much from the obsequious attention of the servants as they laid reverential hands on his portmanteau and dressing-bag.

"Where's his lordship?" asked Dorrien.

"His lordship is in the studio," was the reply. Dorrien laughed; the "studio" was apparently full of amusing import to him, and he directed his steps to the so-called apartment.

As he entered he found himself just in time to catch sight of the avuncular and lordly boot high up in air, kicking an easel, canvas and all, to the ground. There was evidently nothing extraordinary or astonishing in the circumstance, for he merely remarked, "Giving the usual finishing touch, eh?"

"No, sir, quite wrong," replied Lord Todmorden, who at the moment was too excited for the usual greeting; "I hadn't even sketched it out yet."

"What's it meant for—a centipede?" asked Dorrien, picking up the damaged canvas.

"No; confound your impudence or stupidity, I don't

know which! It's an old favourite hunter, only his legs wouldn't come right, although I made about six attempts at each."

"Well, and how are you?" asked Dorrien, as he shook his uncle's hand and threw himself into a chair.

"In my normal condition, Stud, taking things coolly. The man who never worries himself about trifles—d——n that horse's legs—escapes many of the ills that flesh is heir to."

Lord Todmorden was the most excitable man in the world, and the predominant hallucination of his brain was that he was the coolest. He had the greatest affection and admiration for his nephew, and was also a little afraid of him. Had you hinted the latter to him he would probably have kicked you out of his house; but when people alluded to the former sentiments he would say, "Yes, I *am* fond of my nephew Stud, and I admire him. I admire his coolness beyond anything, though I am quite aware that on this point I might be taxed with reprehensible self-vanity, for to admire this in him is to admire a quality so essentially my own, that, hang me, if it's not almost like admiring myself!"

The room in which the reader now sees them went, out of deference to his lordship's injunctions, by the name of "studio," but it was no more a studio than a library, or a workshop, or a smoking-room. It was each and every one. The easel now lying on the floor—a very usual position for it, a few paint brushes scattered about, a pallet of colours lying on a chair—a frequent act of carelessness which sometimes led to his lordship's rising from his seat strangely variegated, and a few lay models constituted it a studio. A carpenter's bench and tools, a turning-lathe, and a few chips and shavings made it a workshop. Lounging chairs, ottomans, pipes, long and short, clay, wood, and meerschaum, cigar-boxes, and effluvium unmistakably pronounced it a smoking-room. The entire apartment was a fair index of Lord Todmorden's restless character. Here he spent the

greater portion of his time, daubing, turning, carving, smoking, and reading.

"Well, Stud, my boy, since I saw you last I may say I have achieved my *chef-d'œuvre* in carpentering. What do you think of this?"

With a proud air Lord Todmorden sat himself down on a throne, something between a pianoforte stool and a child's high chair, which occupied a central position.

"It's a most wonderful piece of mechanism, conceived, designed, and executed entirely by myself. If I were a poor man, Stud, and took out a patent for that chair, I could make a fortune. I put this ledge down in front of me, and it catches securely with a spring; thus it forms a rest for a cup of coffee, my pipe or cigar, my book, or anything, in short. You see the seat revolves bodily on a screw: suppose I'm sitting in the midst of a circle of friends, enjoying a smoke after dinner, and A on my right makes a remark. I naturally wish to turn to him. I merely manipulate this handle, and with the greatest ease I confront——no, confound it! that's the wrong one!"

His lordship, after struggling with a handle like that of a barrel-organ until he was purple in the face, had revolved slowly to the left.

"Merely a *lapsus manus*, that's all. There, that's it. I turn this handle and I confront A."

"Wouldn't it have been rather easier just to have turned your head round at first?" asked Dorrien. "You wouldn't have been half as near bursting a blood-vessel then."

"There now, suppose you make a remark," went on his lordship, who always became suddenly hard of hearing whenever any of his nephew's outspoken remarks were unanswerable. "I turn to you in the same way. I want to write a letter at the table behind me. Hey presto! I turn my handle and——"

"Hey presto—you stick fast."

"Not a bit of it. I accomplish my object safely, easily,

and with dignity," said his lordship in gasps, as he tugged at his handle and slowly brought his face, purpled with the exertion, towards the table. "The great beauty of the contrivance," he continued, as he deftly caught a button carried away in his efforts to work himself back again, "is its simplicity. It would be a capital chair, now, for a judge, or the speaker of the House of Commons, or a leader of an orchestra. Instead of twisting and turning about like an eel, there is something so much more dignified in revolving on your own axis, so to speak. Turn your handle slowly, and you can be as impressive as you like."

Here his lordship suited the action to the word, and transfixed in detail a hardened criminal, a disrespectful counsel, an honourable member out of order, and a faulty violinist.

"I flatter myself, Stud, that the howl about a useless and effete aristocracy does not apply to me. If you were to put me on a desert island, I should be as ingenious and full of expedients as Robinson Crusoe himself. How is your friend you call Dolly?"

It was one of Lord Todmorden's characteristics to be as spasmodic in conversation as he was in action.

"He's all right. I wanted him to come up with me to-day."

"I wish you had, Stud. I wish you had. I like him. He's a good fellow, in spite of his rings and his chains. Bring him up the next time you come. Apart from the pleasure it will afford me to see him for your sake and his own, I shall be fulfilling a dictate of duty in being civil to him. His father may be looked upon as one of the leading representatives of the moneyocracy, a power which has sprung up in this country, and of which, unlike many of my class, I am not jealous. On the contrary, I fully recognise its importance, and would give it its fair share in the administration of national affairs. The man who has been the builder of his own fortunes is, depend upon it, capable of

good, useful work in the fortunes of his country. What is the broad basis on which the proper government of a country rests? Why, the wise distribution, the judicious expenditure of the wealth of that country, and the laborious and gradual acquisition of wealth obviously teach more practical lessons on its management than its hereditary possession and enjoyment can. In uttering these sentiments, I know I am at issue with several noble lords opposite, but——dear me! I beg your pardon, Stud. I often rehearse my speeches here before I go down to the House, and habit got away with me for the moment. I assure you these walls have listened to bursts of eloquence which would not have disgraced a Demosthenes."

Unfortunately for Lord Todmorden, these bursts of eloquence were never listened to by anything else. "A rise out of old Toddy," or "old Hot Toddy," as he was sometimes called, was a standing dish in the House of Lords; and whenever he rose with a carefully prepared speech in his mind, the ironical cheers which always greeted the first few sentences speedily drove him from eloquence to vituperation. He was, notwithstanding, a general favourite; and whatever his faults as a debater, no one could accuse him of interested adherence to the party in power. In his politics he was consistently inconsistent. He was always whatever was out, that he might abuse whatever was in. Were the Conservatives in office?—he was a red republican. Did the Liberals hold the reins of government?—he was a bigoted Tory.

"Now what are you going to do with yourself, Studholme? Will you come out for a drive with me in the park?"

"Well, I don't much care about that fashionable treadmill, and if you'll excuse me I'll stroll down to my club instead."

"Very good, please yourself. We'll meet at dinner at all events. No one else, only you and I. I'll go and dress.

I say, by the way, don't go out until I start. I want to put you up to a wrinkle almost as good as the chair, by gad," chuckled the old lord as he walked out of the room.

"I'll keep that little matter until the evening," soliloquised Dorrien, on being left by himself. "He mayn't like it, and I won't spoil his dinner. The old boy appears in such feather, it would be a pity to bring him down a peg."

Strange enough, much the same sort of ideas were passing through the mind of Lord Todmorden as he dressed for his drive.

"That little matter will keep until after dinner. He mayn't like it, and if he doesn't, I'd sooner be a dog and bay the moon than try to persuade him. We'll have it out after a bottle of Madeira and over a smoke in the studio."

His lordship's toilet was a process of some duration. Not because he was a dandy and addicted to the over-adornment of his person, but because where an ordinary mortal would have had one button, Lord Todmorden had two; where the former would have been content with natural adhesion or gravity, the latter had a complicated system of straps and buckles.

The consequence was, Dorrien's small stock of patience was nearly exhausted, when he received a message from his uncle that he was about to start for his drive.

A well-appointed turn-out was at the door, and standing on the pavement, looking admiringly at a protuberance under the body of the vehicle, was the eccentric old nobleman.

"Now, Stud, what do you think that's for?" he asked, tapping the protuberance with the butt-end of his whip, and jauntily cocking his head on one side to await the anticipated confession of ignorance.

"Don't know, I'm sure," replied Dorrien, with a quiet smile, "unless it's to utterly destroy the look of the trap; in which case, allow me to offer you my congratulations on your success."

"No, no," laughed his lordship, who felt that his inventive genius soared far above the feeble shafts of sarcasm. "I knew you couldn't guess. Now did it never strike you, as you saw wheels—cab-wheels, carriage-wheels, cart-wheels—turning round, that a vast amount of motive power was being wasted? Well, it did me, and I've bottled up that power, sir—utilised it. That horse, as he steps along, not only draws me, but bruises his own oats at the same time; and the simple and beautiful part of the arrangement is its self-regulation. The farther he goes, the more oats he gets when he comes in, which is only fair. The brougham is fitted with a similar contrivance connected with the wheels, and when I'm being driven out to dinner, I experience the satisfaction of knowing that I'm grinding coffee for the whole establishment's consumption on the following day. When I go out into the country, I mean to churn butter on the same principle. In these days of adulteration and strikes, it behoves every man to do as much for himself as possible. Oats in, Henry?"

"Yes, m' lord," replied the groom.

"*Au revoir*, Stud." And Lord Todmorden drove off with a flourish, leaving Dorrien on the pavement, laughing heartily as the receding vehicle left a trail of oats behind it. Something was evidently wrong with the contrivance, and he called out; but the driver was too full of some new dodge probably to hear, and he turned the corner gaily sowing his wild oats.

"What an amusing old boy it is," said Dorrien, as he wended his way to his club. "And what an endless source of fun he'll be to Clive. I wonder what he'll think of it!"

The season was at its height, and as he walked along Piccadilly and St. James' Street, the tide of fashion was setting in strongly towards the Park. The pavement was gay with shiny hats, frock coats, and varnished boots, but Dorrien coolly stemmed the current in a shooting suit and a billycock hat—looking, it must be admitted, not one whit

the less gentlemanly or good-looking on that account. There are some men, slaves of fashion, who would shudder at the idea of walking along Piccadilly or down St. James' Street, in the height of the season and at the fashionable hour of the afternoon, in a suit of dittoes. But what did Dorrien care? He was merely going to his club to lounge about for a couple of hours or so, and why, to perform this very simple operation, should he array himself in a chimney-pot hat and a long coat? He met numerous acquaintances *en route*, who, notwithstanding his unorthodox get-up, thankfully received the careless nods he bestowed on them, and occasionally the billycock hat went off, as a carriage with smiling faces in it swept past.

Having passed away a couple of hours or so, Dorrien walked back again to Berkeley Square, repeating the plucky feat of meeting the stream of fashion as it now flowed back.

At eight o'clock, he and his uncle sat down to a *tête-à-tête* dinner. The old nobleman was in blissful ignorance about the oats, and Dorrien did not think it necessary to enlighten him. The meal was enlivened by many ingenious devices on the part of the host for economising labour and utilising motive power—themes ever on his tongue and in his mind, never within his accomplishment.

"Harris," said his lordship to the butler, "we'll have some of the Governor-General's Madeira after dinner."

"What's in the wind now?" thought Dorrien.

The Governor-General in question had been Lord Todmorden's uncle, and the Madeira had twice doubled the Cape of Good Hope. A bottle of the precious liquid was never produced except on special occasions, and as nothing particular had occurred that day, Dorrien knew that something loomed in the future.

The Madeira in due course appeared and disappeared, and after the latter consummation they adjourned to the studio for coffee and cigars.

"Stud," said his lordship, as soon as he had enthroned himself on his revolving chair, and both had settled down to their cigars, "have you seen the Torkinghams lately? They're in town."

"No. What about them?"

"Clever girl that Grace Torkingham. Splendid girl. By gad, sir, there's a woman to adorn any station in life! There's grace for you! No joke intended. Grace by name and grace by nature. There's self-possession! There are accomplishments! Languages! By Jove, sir, she's a tower of Babel in herself. Then, Sir Piers has no other children, and her fortune will be immense. Beautiful, accomplished, clever, rich, well-born—what more could mortal man desire? I tell you candidly, Stud, that if I were twenty years younger I should experience the greatest difficulty in keeping myself off my marrow-bones in her presence."

"Well, I've no doubt she wouldn't object even now to being Lady Todmorden. Why don't you try?"

"I agree with you. I don't think she would object to being Lady Todmorden. But there's another road to that honour besides marriage with me; a little longer, perhaps, but possibly pleasanter."

His lordship cast a wistful, sidelong glance at his nephew, and continued in earnest tones:

"When your father died, Stud, he left you a little orphan in my charge, and I don't think I have betrayed the trust. I have looked upon you as my own son, placed all a father's affection, all a father's hopes on you. I never married, Stud, for your sake. I had got to look upon you so much as my own child, that I could not run the risk of supplanting you. I have marked with satisfaction and pride your gradual development into a man of sound abilities, coupled with resolution and firmness of purpose. A man calculated to make his way in whatever direction he may choose to apply his powers. Of that coolness and self-possession which seem never to desert you, I will say no more than that they are

highly serviceable attributes, and that I have remarked them with satisfaction. You have evidently imbibed them from me with your growth, and it would ill become me to say anything more in praise of qualities which are so essentially, so peculiarly my own. It would savour too much of self-adulation."

His lordship was about as self-possessed at that moment as an old lady crossing Regent Street in the height of the season.

"I have great hopes of you, Stud. We are an old family, but for many generations we have, as it were, rested on our oars. Nothing for the last century and a half has been done to shed an additional lustre over the name. Each successor to the title has held it untarnished, but nothing more. I myself have capabilities, which, however useful they may be to one's fellow-creatures and one's self, still are not of that nature to dazzle the world and bring distinction. Ah! you smile."

Dorrien was thinking of the oats.

"It has ever been the fate of inventive genius to be smiled at, rather than upon. But you, Stud, have more force of character than falls to the lot of most men. I pin my faith on you. You must not rest contented with the honours you will inherit from me. They must only be the foundations of higher ones. Now Grace Torkingham——"

"In the name of all that's long-winded and mysterious, what has that unmitigated blue-stocking got to do with the family honours?"

"A great deal, perhaps, Stud. A woman like her would thrust greatness on the veriest dullard in existence. But marry her to a man with the germs of greatness in him, and he would travel along a royal road to Fame. What a wife for a proud man holding a high position! I can fancy her fulfilling all the duties of her station with grace, wisdom, and understanding." (Lord Todmorden felt so deeply with his subject that he talked as if he were saying his prayers.) "I

can picture her, surrounded by guests, doing the honours of her house—talking to foreign potentates or their ambassadors in their own tongues—enthralling, by turns, the statesman, the traveller, the painter, the musician, the man of science, with the depth and pertinence of her conversation. I can see her poring over blue books and parliamentary reports, gathering material for her husband's speeches, suggesting a happy touch here, supplying an apt illustration there. To a man with a spark of ambition in his breast, there's a helpmate! Stud, I've set my heart on her being your wife."

The old man turned towards Dorrien, and looked earnestly in his face. He was so in earnest as to forget all about his handles, which was a great simplification of matters.

Dorrien did not speak for a few moments.

"Does silence give consent, Stud?" asked the old man, as if he were a young one hanging on some loved one's lips for the magic "yes" or "no."

"No," said Dorrien. "I was thinking of the least painful way of dashing your hopes, for I'm sorry to hear that you've set your heart on an impossibility. However, the best and kindest surgeon is often the one who cuts deepest and does so promptly. I shall never marry Miss Torkingham, and for a very good reason."

"You don't mean to say you're married already?" gasped his lordship.

"No, not exactly, but I'm going to be—and it's not to Miss Torkingham."

"And may I ask to whom, if you'll not consider the question an impertinent piece of curiosity on my part?" asked Lord Todmorden, vainly endeavouring to take things coolly.

"No, not at all. I came up expressly to tell you all about it: Miss Belmont."

"What, that little hop-o'-my-thumb, just out of the nursery?" spluttered Lord Todmorden. (He knew the

Belmonts slightly.) "A pretty fool you've made of yourself." And he got out of his chair as soon as his trembling hands had unfastened the bar in front, and walked about the room like a caged ourang-outang.

"Come, uncle," said Dorrien quietly, "what's the good of all this fluster? Where's the quality, 'so peculiarly, so essentially your own?' Don't you think you might exercise a little of it now with advantage?"

"What the devil do you mean, sir? The only term which can adequately express my frame of mind at the present moment is—is—cucumberic. Yes, sir, cucumberic, if I may be allowed to coin a word to meet the exigencies of this occasion. A deuced meagre language this English! By gad, I'll learn Sanskrit! I wonder if it's a good language to swear in! If it is, my godfathers and godmothers have been guilty of gross neglect in not having had it taught me in my youth, which I shall never forgive. Cucumberic, sir, cucumberic alone expresses——oh, go to the devil!"

So saying, his lordship bounced out of the room, cutting over anything within his reach on the way, and banged the door.

Dorrien merely shrugged his shoulders, and, with a quiet smile on his face, went to the table and commenced writing a letter to Clive, in fulfilment of a promise that he would at once let her know what his uncle said about it all.

"The old boy received the announcement with his usual coolness," wrote Dorrien, "and, most extraordinary coincidence, he himself broached the subject of matrimony. It appears that he has been most anxious for me to marry. He has just left the room, and the last words as he closed the door were in the form of his usual blessing when labouring under great emotion."

"There," said Dorrien, "that won't make her miserable, and I haven't told any lies about it. I won't take the merry smile out of her face until I can be on the spot to bring it back again the next moment."

"His lordship wishes to have the studio to himself as soon as you've quite done with it, sir. He desires me to say that he has work of great importance he wishes to finish to-night."

"Very well. Say I'm going to the club at once, and the room will be at his lordship's service."

The man bowed his powdered head with the deepest respect, and retired to promulgate his own impressions in a gradually descending style of diction.

"There's been a slight *congtertong* between his lordship and the captain, I imagine, Mr. 'Arris," he remarked, as he happened to meet the butler. "There's been a bit of a shake-up with old Fireworks, I reckon," he said, as he and another footman put their powdered heads together on the stairs; and "old Swizzle-'ead's in another of his blessed tantrums," was his way of putting it in the servants' hall.

The butler received the intelligence with affability. There's nothing like a bottle of very good Madeira for promoting this quality, and Mr. Harris was too artistic and finished a judge of wine ever to open a bottle of the Governor-General's Madeira for Lord Todmorden without doing the same for himself.

Dorrien went to his club, and when he returned in the small hours he heard his uncle working away at the carpenter's bench in the "studio" as if his living depended on his exertions.

The next morning his lordship failed to put in an appearance at breakfast, and sent a message that he was not well enough to come down or to see his nephew previous to his departure for Aldershot that day.

Dorrien took the hint, and returned to his regiment and Clive Belmont in the course of the morning.

## CHAPTER V.

### ALTERCATION.

THERE was not much lamentation and weeping when Dorrien told Clive the result of his interview with his uncle; but, infinitely more touching, there was a sorrow-stricken, blanched little face, with quivering lips and despairing eyes, turned mutely up to his.

"But your letter, Stud, I thought——"

"Yes, that was a piece of deception. I thought it much better to wait until I could tell you all about it myself. Don't look so miserable, Clive. You don't suppose that it will make any difference! My uncle's head is full of crotchets, which can be swept away with proper management like cobwebs with a besom. When he knows a little more of you, he'll be as much in favour of our marriage as he now is against it. Besides, if he never is, what does it matter? You don't imagine I'd give you up for five hundred uncles, do you?"

In this way, Dorrien soon brought back the colour to Clive's face, and the bright smile to her lips.

Not so easily reassured was Colonel Belmont. Dorrien, as in honour bound he felt it his duty to do, at once told him, without reservation or colour, his uncle's sentiments regarding the match; and the old colonel, without being exactly one of the peppery old idiots colonels are on the stage, was easily fired where the Belmont dignity was slighted. To allow his daughter to enter a family in direct

opposition to its head was a thought which brought the blood to his furrowed cheeks. He knew Lord Todmorden, however, his peculiarities and his whims; and of the two, the uncle and nephew, he felt how much more responsible a personage was the latter. For nearly ten years had he known Studholme Dorrien—known him as a colonel through his opportunities can know an officer under him—and his knowledge of his character made him feel that his opinion and arguments were entitled to every consideration, even though he might be speaking with the glamour of love over his senses. He knew, too, what a hold a man like this would have on a girl's affections, and that to dash the cup from her lips would be to blast her young life. These considerations made him modify his first resolution of putting as decided a veto on the marriage as Lord Todmorden himself could have, had he had the power, and he consented to a continuance of the engagement. To do Colonel Belmont justice, his faith in Dorrien's stability of character, his knowledge of the reverse in Lord Todmorden, and his love for his child had everything to do with his decision; the prospective title, nothing.

So the cloud passed away from over Clive's path as suddenly as it had risen, and all was once more sunny and bright. There were spots on the sun certainly. It would have been brighter still had the light of Lord Todmorden's countenance shone upon them; and then, again, there was Dolly Jones. He was not the old Dolly by any means. Clive could see that in spite of his efforts at gaiety, and she was always sending him little notes by Dorrien, containing equal parts of consolation for himself and abuse of that unprincipled flirt who had so heartlessly thrown him over. The way, too, in which she would tackle Aunt Smack whenever that austere female said anything disparaging of her old friend, which was as often as she said anything at all about him, surprised herself almost as much as it did the object of her attacks.

"George," said Miss Belmont to her brother, after one of these passages of arms, in which Clive had done battle in defence of her friend with even more than usual spirit, "you have spoiled and are spoiling that child; she's becoming unbearable. Mark my words, you will bitterly repent it. I never yet knew a spoiled child who did not grow to be a thorn in the foolish parents' side."

"Macnamara," returned the colonel in his own grim way, "you have made that remark before, and I cannot conceive what profit or pleasure it can afford you to draw so constantly from me the same piece of advice, that you had better mind your own business."

"It is my business, George, as far as warning you and even expostulating with you goes. If I see you walking blindfold towards a precipice, surely it's my business to put out a hand to turn you aside. I say you are spoiling her, and laying up for yourself a miserable old age, like King Lear's. Her manner to me is at times most disrespectful, and you never check her."

"She's never disrespectful to you, Macnamara, except when you abuse her friends, and I shall never reprove or chide her for standing up for an absent friend. I admire it in her. I would as soon think of blaming her for telling the truth. Besides, you bring it on yourself."

"Surely one can speak their mind concerning certain people without being subjected to outbursts of petulance and waywardness from a spoiled child."

"She's never petulant and wayward with me."

"You give in to her in everything. She has no occasion to be."

"Petulance and waywardness don't wait for occasion, Macnamara. I contend I do not spoil her. I cherish her. I have nothing else. I do everything I can to make her life bright and happy—why shouldn't I? Her troubles will come soon enough. My only real happiness now is what I catch from the reflection of hers."

"You see it's a selfish love after all, George; that constant corrective watchfulness, requisite for the proper and gradual formation of a child's character, would have been as irksome to you as to her, and you let it alone. You shirked it, George, and that's about the plain English of it."

"Not at all. Were I to see that my kindness and indulgences were making her vain, selfish, insincere, no consideration for myself would deter me from altering my conduct towards her. But when I can make her all the happier and none the worse by being fond and showing it, what's to prevent my doing so? There is every reason why I should, and none whatever why I shouldn't. I have the approval of my own conscience in the matter, and I want nothing more."

"You say she's not vain. I say she is. What stronger proof is there of vanity than the slavish obedience to all the senseless and fanciful dictates of fashion? She always dresses in the height of the fashion—vile phrase! it goes against my grain. It should be in the lowest depths of fashion, if anything at all. And what is fashionable dressing but labelling your body 'vanity within?'"

"There is another description of vanity in dress, Macnamara, and that is to try and show that you despise it; and, egad," said the old colonel, putting up his glasses and scanning his sister's gaunt and eccentrically clad figure, "I'm delighted my daughter's vanity doesn't take the same direction as yours. Hang me, if I don't think you take considerably more pains to be out of the fashion than she ever does to be in."

"There is more ingenuity than ingenuousness in your defence of vanity, George—a defence which could have emanated from none but a wilfully distorted mind. Like most men, you are only too glad to foster and encourage weakness in women, in order that you may hug yourselves in your fancied superiority over them. You like a woman to be yielding, soft——"

"I confess I prefer them that way to cast-iron," said the old colonel.

"Dressed-up dolls—dependent idiots, in fact."

"Yes, even in that form I admit I like them better than unsexed. Like Sir Hugh Evans, 'I hate a woman with a beard!'"

"The reasons for your preference are essentially manly, and are also obvious. There ought to be a law in this and every other civilised land that no female child should be under the sole control of a male parent. If I had ever had a child——"

"I don't believe, Macnamara, that you could ever have been guilty of anything half so effeminate," said the old colonel with a grim chuckle.

"'How ill gray hairs become a fool,'" retorted Miss Belmont.

She seldom made use of an opprobrious epithet, but when she did she wrapped it up in a quotation, with this advantage, that while her own conscience acquitted her of the charge of bad language, the object of her wrath, not so well read probably as herself, was unaware of its second-hand nature, and took it in all its original force. In this way she was often able to pelt her opponents in discussion with a little Billingsgate mud, without, in her own opinion, soiling her hands in the least.

"You're perfectly at liberty to call me names, Macnamara, if it affords you the slightest satisfaction; but leave my child alone. No one shall come between her and me, except, when she's married, her husband; and, thank God, the man who is going to hold that right is one to whom, of all others, I can give her in all trust and confidence. As the wife of Studholme Dorrien, I consider her happiness is built on a rock. Never was future brighter than my child's, so don't try to overshadow it with clouds of your own raising. Now, there is an end of the subject, and there is no use pursuing it farther."

"As you like, George. I consider I am only doing my duty in warning you, and that is and will be a satisfaction to me. But when, some day in the future, which may loom rather darker than you imagine, you reap the bitter fruits of your over-indulgence——"

"What does the woman mean?" cried the colonel with unwonted warmth. "Do you think she's going to rob a church, turn fashionable swindler, poison me, kill her husband, throttle you, get stuck in Madame Tussaud's Chamber of Horrors, eh? What's the meaning of this croaking, you bird of ill-omen? Look here, Macnamara, if you consider it your mission in life to try and embitter the one drop of comfort in my cup by your Cassandra-like mutterings, we had better part."

"So be it, George."

"What's your object? Speak out plainly, and once for all. Why do you dislike Clive? What is there in my child," said the colonel, his voice trembling, "to inspire any one with aversion towards her? Don't let's have anything about 'dark futures' and 'bitter fruits,' but speak out in plain English."

"Excuse me, George, I shall do nothing of the kind. I shall not say a word more. The language of reason and sense would be thrown away upon you in your present frame of mind. When you are cooler, perhaps I may pursue the subject."

"Then may I retain my heat as long as Mount Etna, say I," fervently exclaimed the colonel as his sister left the room.

This was not the first time, by any means, that Clive had been a bone of contention between the two. Many a sharp brush had brother and sister on the subject. But would not indifference to an object so far beneath her as a "petulant and wayward child" have been more becoming in Miss Belmont than this petty and spiteful warfare? Was it not rather using the Nasmyth hammer of her stupendous

intellect to crush this little empty nutshell? But, in the first place, whence all this ire? What had Clive done to incur this wrath?

Simply she was not as afraid of her aunt as her aunt thought she ought to have been. So accustomed was Miss Belmont to see people retire into their shells and cower and droop in her presence, that to be quite natural, quite at home—in short, not in the least overawed by her superior knowledge, her commanding tones, and her freezing manner—amounted in any one, but particularly in a young creature, to a personal affront.

Of all these enormities was Clive guilty, and of others still more flagrant. She would even poke fun at her aunt sometimes, and this was a deadly sin. She would actually argue too with her, and in argument she was like the British infantry in battle, she never knew when she was beaten. She would expose herself in the open, and be pounded by the heavy artillery of her opponent's logic with the liveliest unconsciousness of the deadliness of the fire, and receive a shot right in the most vital part with a merry ringing laugh, and in utter ignorance of the fact that she was then and there logically slain; which all of it gave the lookers-on, over whose heads Miss Macnamara Belmont's fire was probably a long way, the idea that Clive was getting the best of it altogether. It was a duel between Science with an eighty-one ton gun and Innocence with a pea-shooter, in which the latter was having all its own way.

Why, it may be asked, did Miss Belmont condescend to break a lance with an antagonist so utterly unworthy of her steel? Why, you might as well ask, doesn't an Irishman keep out of a fight? I suppose it's because he can't help it, and this is the same reason why Miss Belmont could not keep out of an argument. She couldn't help it. The long and short of it was, Clive did not hold her aunt in that awe which her aunt inspired in most people, and which she believed to be her due. This, then, was the head and front

of Clive's offending. To Aunt Mac it was a constant irritant.

Miss Belmont, as she had left the room, had found fault with her brother's frame of mind, and so did he when left to his own meditations. Her evil prognostications, seemingly to him as baseless as they were base, had aroused a most unusual storm of feeling; and now there came calm, deep reflection. That Clive could ever be cold, ungrateful, or turn against him, which he took to be the plain English of "dark futures" and "bitter fruits," was an utter impossibility. But there were other ways in which his loving heart could be wrung. Was he guilty before God of the crime of idolatry? Had he set up this idol in his heart, and offered up to it that worship which was due to the Lord his God who was a jealous God? And would He in His justice visit this sin upon his head and upon his child's head? But He was a God of mercy as well as of justice, thought the old colonel, with a ray of light bursting in upon the gloom; and after all his trials—his child murdered by the mutineers, his wife bereft of reason and then taken from him, his wounds —might he not hope that He in that infinite mercy would have pity and leave him his one little ewe-lamb?

Only too readily the colonel laid the flattering unction to his soul, and with peace of mind came a gentler feeling towards his grim sister. He had lost his temper with her as he had not done for years. Rarely did the stern old soldier lose command of himself for a moment, and he was now sorry for it. He knew that his sister's quiet "So be it, George," in reply to his suggestion that they should part, had probably settled the matter beyond all possibility of change, for when Miss Macnamara Belmont said, "so be it," so was it; and he would fain have recalled his words.

"I don't see how I can ask for my trespasses to be forgiven me as I forgive them that trespass against me, if I allow myself to harbour any of those thoughts which I certainly felt towards Macnamara a few moments ago. I

could have wrung her neck, confound her! I haven't made an abstruse science of religion," continued the old soldier, "for in the first place I am not scientific; in the second place, science is based on nothing but proved fact, and religion rests solely on faith, so there can be no connection between the two. I don't care whether a curate wears a cross down his back or whether he doesn't, as long as he's sincere in thinking he's doing right; but I've an old-fashioned idea that one's conscience is not a bad guide in all matters of right or wrong, and there's no mistaking its promptings to me now to make it up with Macnamara. I'll go to Clive. She shall be my little messenger of peace."

## CHAPTER VI.

### "DADDLES."

Of all the rooms in the house, the brightest, the cosiest, and prettiest was, as may be naturally supposed, Clive's sanctum, to which the colonel now directed his steps. It was here that the fond old man laid his richest offerings at the shrine of his idol, and it was here he would go to have life's petty cares and bothers chased away from his mind by the presiding genius. There was some choice and suitable record of every country he had been in around its walls or on its tables; and he never was away from home, no matter for how short a period, without bringing back some proof of his fondness in absence, in the shape of something to add to the beauty or comfort of the bright little apartment. Aunt Smack rarely darkened its doors. To her, in her contemptuous austerity, it was a chamber of horrors, and the lavish expenditure in connection with it was one of the many counts in the indictment against her brother. Here she had some *locus standi.* Colonel Belmont was, in these days of mushroom wealth, a comparatively poor man, and Clive's boudoir would have done for a duchess. It was all his own doing. Clive often begged him in perfect sincerity not to go wasting any more money over her, but when the mischief was done, she could not all the same prevent her eyes from sparkling, or withhold the affectionate hug and kiss expected in return.

Whatever the colonel was concerning his daughter, he was no sybarite as regards himself, the following being as nearly as possible a complete inventory of the effects of his own room :—A small iron camp-bed, two feet broad, in which as a young subaltern, he had dreamed of love and war; a small strip of carpet by its side; a portable washing-stand with metal fixings; a large tub in which the colonel performed his ablutions when settled, and in which the washing-stand hid its diminished self when on the move; a small glass capable of reflecting only a portion of the colonel's countenance at a time; a military chest of drawers which were wardrobe, *escritoire*, and toilet-table all in one; a boot-jack, whose duties in the colonel's hot youth had been equally divided between his own feet and his servants' heads, and a few simple little relics of auld lang syne, intrinsically worthless, extrinsically precious beyond price.

Clive's bower, however, not the colonel's den, is where our scene lies.

There was no occasion for him to knock at the door; Clive had caught the sound of his well-known footstep and the jingle of his spurs on the stairs, and stood awaiting him on the landing. As he crossed the threshold he seemed to leave his grim stern nature behind him on the door-mat; and if the men of the regiment, who trembled in their regulation boots before him in the orderly-room and on the parade-ground, could only have had a peep at him in this enchanted little realm, his face wreathed, positively wreathed with smiles, they would have said, "No, no; this here ain't never old Rough-an'-tough; it's impossible."

Clive's first act was to plump the old colonel into an arm-chair, sacredly and exclusively his, which he was always telling her spoiled the look of her room, and which she was always telling him was the dearest and most beautiful thing in it. Her next act was to squat her small form on his great bony knees, and then in that position to place a hand on each shoulder and look playfully into the grizzled, worn face.

This last was suggestive of the picture of Peace, with the lamb peering into the muzzle of a rusty old cannon.

"Well, Daddles, you look all right now, but what made you look so grumpy when you were coming up the stairs and didn't know I was watching you?"

"Well, perhaps I *had* been ruffled up the wrong way a little, but I'm all right now, Clive; you're my little sunbeam, which always makes everything bright again."

Clive acknowledged this compliment by calling him a "dear old Daddlekins," and then when Colonel Belmont laughed at this, she got more demonstrative still, and, rubbing her face against his as if her nose were a gimlet, and she were going to bore a hole straight through his head, said that he was a "dear darling pet of an old daddlekindoodle-cumtootlets." This elaborate term of endearment was the composition of the moment, and was uttered in a savage manner between set teeth, as if she were very much in earnest about her work. This, when the colonel was the object, was a favourite style of blandishment with Clive.

Under this treatment the deep lines in the furrowed face seemed actually to fade away as if they had been merely pencil marks and Clive's soft cheeks the best description of india-rubber.

Daddlekindoodlecumtootlets, indeed!

What would the men of the regiment have said of "old Rough-an'-tough" now, if they could have heard that? It is no use speculating on this point, for wonder would either have deprived them of speech altogether or found vent in language too strong for these pages.

"Well, what was it, Daddles, that was ruffling you up the wrong way? Something up at the barracks, I suppose; that horrid War Office bothering your life out, questioning this and disallowing that."

"Well, they're the devil, certainly; but they didn't bother me this morning. Red tape wasn't the cause of my

cross looks—that's to say if I *was* looking cross and worried, which I don't plead guilty to."

"It doesn't matter what you plead, Daddles," and here the soft cheek was rubbed against the iron-bound countenance; "seeing is believing. What was it? Now come, no tarradiddles, or, as it says in that horrid book you're always poring over, 'the evidence you shall give before this court shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.'"

"Well, perhaps I may have been thinking of a few words I had with your aunt. I'm afraid she is going to leave us, Clive."

"Hoo—oh! but I don't know that I'm so glad after all," said Clive, breaking off in the middle of a shrill cheer. "Poor old Aunt Smack, one has got accustomed to her like the eels to skinning, and really I should quite miss her, though I don't exactly know why, for I'm sure she doesn't like me. But what were the words about, Daddles? Now, the whole truth and nothing but the truth, recollect."

Colonel Belmont hesitated.

"I know; it was all about me. I was the apple of discord. I'm sure of it. She said I was a foolish, frivolous little thing, and you said I wasn't, and all the rest of it. I know that's her opinion of me. I can read it in her face every moment of the day. I'm determined now, more than ever, Daddles, that she mustn't go. She's your own sister, the only one of your family left, and I should never forgive myself for being the cause of a lasting breach between you. No, Aunt Macnamara must stay with us, and I don't care how much humble pie I eat, Daddles, if I can only keep her here for your sake."

The colonel put his brawny arm round her slender waist, and drew her closer to him.

"Well, Clive, suppose you be my little messenger of peace."

"I'll go at once, Daddles. The sooner it's settled the

better. You leave it all to me, and if you follow in a few moments you'll see Aunt Smack and myself smoking the calumet of peace, like a couple of friendly Choctaws over a bottle of rum."

Miss Macnamara Belmont, austere and reading, sat in the breakfast-room as the messenger of peace entered. Figuratively, Clive bore her flag of truce in her face and manner. There was an air of meek conciliation about her which might have disarmed Bellona herself. But Miss Belmont was equal to the occasion, and merely looked up from her book with cold disapproval, as if she would have preferred an entry with beat of drum and savage war-cry.

Undeterred by cold looks, Clive sat herself meekly down on a small stool at her aunt's feet, and, resting her clasped hands on the sombre-covered knees, looked up with her most winning expression of countenance.

Miss Macnamara Belmont slowly laid her book on her lap, and looked down. Clive not only met the cold eyes unflinchingly, but even managed to throw a little additional witchery into the return gaze. It was uphill work, but it was for "Daddles' sake," and she persevered. Not even when Aunt Macnamara straightened out her knees, as an intimation that they could dispense with the honour of being leaned upon, was Clive put off. It was a nasty little mouthful of humble pie; but she gulped it down with a smiling face, and cleared her throat for the delivery of the pretty little speech she had rehearsed all the way from her room.

"Aunt Smack——"

Miss Macnamara Belmont started up as if she had sat on a rattle-snake, while Clive herself became suddenly conscious of having put her foot into it, and pulled a horrified face. Nicknames were abominations in the sight of Miss Belmont. "Daddles," and "Daddlekins," and the other long epithet had sometimes driven her to the verge of insanity. But a nickname applied to herself was beyond all

endurance. She had once heard Clive, as a child, speak of her as Aunt Smack; and though she suspected the habit was still continued behind her back, never had the offence been committed to her face. The affront was deadly, and Clive aggravated it still farther. That she should thus, after her glowing figure about the calumet of peace over the bottle of rum and the careful rehearsal of her speech, have brought the whole scheme tumbling about her ears at the very first word she uttered was too much for her sense of the ridiculous, and her vain efforts to control her laughter ended in a fit of feeble giggling.

"Leave the room, child. I don't know what your object in coming to me was; but if it was to afford me an additional proof of the frivolity and littleness of your nature, to which everything great, solemn, or serious is, and ever will be, foreign, you have been successful. Leave the room."

There was no need for this second dismissal, for before the words were clear of Miss Belmont's set teeth, Clive was well on her way to "Daddles," to throw herself on him, and to tell him, betwixt laughing and crying, what a foolish little ambassadress she had been, and how she had put her foot into it, and that he needn't trouble himself to go and see the calumet of peace and bottle of rum performance.

It is needless to add that Clive's mission had not the meditated effect of inducing Miss Macnamara Belmont to stay under her brother's roof. She left it the following day, taking, as she retreated, a Scythian shot at the colonel in the shape of a letter full of evil prognostications concerning Clive's future.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE ENGINEER AND HIS PETARD.

THE London season had commenced, and Colonel Belmont determined upon taking Clive up to town for a few weeks, so that while she was still under his wing his might be the unselfish pleasure of witnessing and conducing to the enjoyment of her first season. The Belmonts were, as the phrase goes, "highly connected," and their exalted relatives were always ready to be civil to the colonel, chiefly because the independent old soldier had always shown them that he did not care two straws whether they were or not. No demeanour invites civility more than a genuine and utterly careless indifference to it. Colonel Belmont, then, had only to set himself up in a small but rather fashionably-situated house for the few weeks he intended being in town, and the charmed circle of a "good set" was opened to him. Balls and kettledrums were not much in the colonel's line, but at these usages of society he chose to look, for the time being, from Clive's point of view. In this self-devoted spirit the colonel stood on staircases and in doorways, or sat at operas or concerts with his legs stiffening in the joints, calmly pleased because he could read enjoyment in Clive's bright face. Of course, she was presented—the high and mighty relatives did that—and even out of that aristocratic cross between the Black Hole of Calcutta and a football "scrimmage," known as a Drawing Room, did the colonel,

in his paternal sympathy, derive a certain amount of gratification.

The hilt of a deputy-lieutenant's court-sword was running into his back, a short naval officer's epaulet was grinding against one of his ribs, a stout old gentleman was on his toe, a dowager's feathers were tickling his nose; but Clive was on his arm, animated and interested, and he was happy.

Wherever Clive was—in the Row in the mornings, riding with her father, at ball, opera, or concert in the evening—there, or thereabouts, was generally Studholme Dorrien. He had obtained a fortnight's leave of absence, and was, of course, spending it in close proximity to Clive.

Not, as of yore, had he taken up his quarters at his uncle's. That eccentric old nobleman continued to cherish his pet matrimonial scheme in connection with Miss Torkingham, and this subject was between uncle and nephew as dangerous to meddle with as a live shell. The same house, with this difference of opinion, could not have contained them. This continued opposition on Lord Todmorden's part was unpleasant. Colonel Belmont chafed under it. So did Clive at times. It was the only skeleton in her cupboard, which otherwise was full to overflowing with everything that was sweet and delicious—a jam cupboard with one nasty, unpleasant old cockroach spoiling the flavour of everything in it. Dorrien cared least about this opposition. Indeed, it was only for the sake of others that it ever caused him a moment's disquiet. He felt it was merely two minds pulling in different directions, and that the victory must be with the stronger. Of the ultimate result he never had the slightest doubt, but still, for the sake of Clive, and of old Lord Todmorden himself, whom he really liked, he sincerely wished that the struggle should not be a protracted one.

It was a great relief then to all concerned, when one day Lord Todmorden, with the suddenness of a weathercock in

a squall, chopped round, and first left cards at the Belmonts', with a polite note to the colonel apologising for not having done so before, and then looked his nephew up at his rooms in the most friendly manner possible. Then his advance was followed up by another, an invitation at an early date to a small musical party.

"Musical party!" thought Dorrien, who was of course also bidden. "I never knew him break out in that direction before. The old boy has, I suppose, seen the error of his ways, and is anxious to make amends."

Colonel Belmont and Clive looked at the matter in the same light, and of course willingly advanced their half of the way by accepting.

All this time Lord Todmorden lived, metaphorically, with one eye shut and a finger to his nose. As the evening of the musical party drew near, he would often chuckle to himself and mutter: "I wonder I didn't think of this before. On a fool the lesson might be lost; but a sensible fellow like Studholme cannot fail to take it to heart and profit by it. When the opportunity is given him of comparing the two together—the stateliness, the accomplishments, the talents of the one with the insignificance, frivolity, and silliness of the other, the scales will fall from his eyes."

Such was the train which this crafty old Guy Fawkes was laying wherewith to blow poor little Clive's happiness sky-high. Now and then he felt some little twinges of conscience, particularly on one occasion, when he met Clive and her father riding in the park in the early morning, and stopped to speak with them.

"It's a nice little face, hang it, so it is," ruminated his lordship as he continued his ride. "And a sort of little face, too, confound it! that could look very broken-hearted and reproachful, and haunt a man very disagreeably after he had seen it like that. Broken hearts! Nonsense! Broken fiddlesticks! I ought to be ashamed of myself, at my time of life and with my experience of society, talking about

broken hearts. She'll cry half an hour the first day, quarter of an hour the next, five minutes the third, and by the end of the week she'll be as desperately in love with some one else as she now fancies herself to be with Stud. Broken hearts—bosh ! In real life, Ophelia would have died, if she died at all, from a severe attack of influenza caught from going about in that scanty sort of attire. So would Juliet. If Shakspeare had stuck to nature he would have polished her off with an attack of bronchitis caught in the balcony, and not made her poison herself for love. And as to Paul and Virginia, and Héloïse and Abelard, if they could have just gone in for a little fashionable London society together, Paul would have been carrying on shamefully with Héloïse while Abelard was down at the House, and Virginia would have bolted with Abelard before the season was over. That's what it would have been in real life. They only do the other thing—sigh and cry and die, in poetry."

Such, with sundry variations and self-congratulation on his knowledge of human nature, was the general drift of Lord Todmorden's cogitations at this period; and when the eventful evening arrived, he looked upon the desired object as next to an accomplished fact.

The musical party was not a large one. The smaller the better. A fiercer light would then beat on the two central figures of the conspirator's plot. It was the usual thing. There were a few young people looking over photographic albums, and thinking how much "awfully jollier" it would be if it were a dance instead; a sprinkling of dowagers leaning back and fanning themselves; a few elderly and middle-aged gentlemen talking politics in little knots; while now and again a formal murmur of, "Oh, thank you ! very pretty indeed," would run through the room as the sudden cessation of some sound, which for several minutes people's senses had abstractedly become accustomed to, told them that somebody had been doing something at the piano. Forming one of a knot of politicians was Colonel Belmont,

and very contented and happy in the society of Dorrien was Clive. Amongst the guests was also Dolly Jones, to whom Lord Todmorden had sent an especial invitation; and with him came the impressible Captain Garstang. "If any brother-officer of yours, who should happen to be in town, would care to accompany you, by all means bring him. I'm always happy to see any of Stud's friends," had said Lord Todmorden in his note to Dolly, and to this open invitation Garstang, who happened to be in the way at the moment of its receipt, had, with execrable taste, considering the coolness between himself and Dorrien, responded in person.

When in his uncle's house, to his uncle's guests, Dorrien was rather more courteous than usual to people he disliked, if there happened to be any such present; but when Garstang entered the room he took no pains to conceal his contemptuous surprise. The man brought it on himself, for he must have known he was laying himself open to a snub in going to a house where Dorrien was, if not the host, next door to it. Garstang had felt this before he came, and as he relished a snub as little as most people, least of all at the hands of a man he now cordially detested, there must have been some powerful counter-attraction. The fact was, he was somewhat of a tuft-hunter, and not averse to a morsel of dirt-pie now and then if he could add another good name to his list of acquaintances. In the second place, he had now attached himself to Dolly Jones for reasons best known to himself; and, in the third place, he had heard the Belmonts were going to be present, and of late he had taken to turning up in Clive's path with most unwelcome persistency.

"Dolly, what made you bring that man with you?" asked Clive, as Dolly took an early opportunity of seating himself near her. "I never came across any one I disliked so. I can't be civil to him, and the ruder I am, the more he has taken to persecuting me. I really didn't think,

Dolly, you would have been an abettor in the persecution."

"Well, it was very provoking; he would come with me—I could not help it," replied Dolly, whose equable temperament was occasionally in this matter much ruffled. "It's impossible to shut him up!"

"Well, never mind him, Dolly. Let's talk about you. I was so glad to see you come in. The very best thing you can do is to go about and mix in society, and amuse yourself, and not go moping over that little tale of unrequited affection; she's not worth it. But, whatever you do, don't be a silly moth, Dolly, and go fluttering about the flame that has already burnt you. She might just get you into her meshes again for her own amusement."

Here Dolly was seized with a fit of coughing—nervous, not bronchial—and murmured behind his hand that he would keep out of danger.

"Incompatibility of temper, indeed! Do you know I can't get over that? I think of it so often, and it would make me laugh if it didn't make me so angry."

All this time Lord Todmorden was entertaining his guests in a somewhat fussy and constrained manner, and there was an expectancy about him which operated against a calm settling down to the duties of host. At last, "Sir Piers and Miss Torkingham" were announced, and his lordship forthwith became a different creature.

A tall, stately girl was Miss Torkingham, handsome but repellent; and as she strode up the room, the observed of all observers, she seemed to say, "I'm the most commanding, the cleverest, and best-informed person in this company." Sir Piers, her father, was a mere appendage, and walked meekly behind. Every one in the room stared at Miss Torkingham; no one glanced at Sir Piers, for which he was probably very thankful. He was a gentlemanly-looking old man with a profile in two lines—one from the top of his head to the tip of his nose, the other from the tip of his

nose to his cravat. The prevailing expression on the face so formed was hopeless bewilderment, as if the owner were perpetually wondering how he could have had anything to do with the authorship of so gifted a personage as the young lady who condescended to call him "papa." This was as great a puzzle to outsiders as to Sir Piers himself. As he generally walked behind her, her remarks were, as a rule, confined to sharp cautions and sharper reproofs on the subject of treading on her train.

"My dear Miss Torkingham, how late you are!" said Lord Todmorden, seizing both her hands, partly out of cordiality, partly in consequence of having, in his hurry to welcome her, tripped over a footstool on the way. With consummate tact, he made it appear entirely the former. "Dear me, I thought you had forgotten all about my little party, in the press of your numerous engagements. I was really beginning to think very badly of you, and to imagine you were going to throw me over altogether."

"Ah! my dear Lord Todmorden, '*Les absents ont toujours tort*,'" said Miss Torkingham, as she sank majestically into a seat.

The remark was not strikingly apposite, but it was in a foreign language, which was much more of an object.

"How do you do, Sir Piers?" said Lord Todmorden, as, Miss Torkingham's stately figure having subsided, the bewildered face in two lines came into view.

Sir Piers shook hands, said nothing, and took a secluded seat, to resume in undisturbed meditation the puzzle of his life.

The buzz of conversation, which had been interrupted by the entrance of Miss Torkingham—for she was a sort of girl whose appearance generally turned speakers into starers—was soon resumed, and Lord Todmorden moved about jubilant and elated.

"Never saw her look so superb, so magnificent, so majestic, so commanding, as she does this evening. There's

a figure for you! There's a bust! There's a Juno-like style of beauty! There's a classical head! There's a brow with the stamp of genius sparkling on it like a diadem," he chuckled. "If Stud's eyes aren't opened, an oyster-knife wouldn't do it."

In the midst of his exultation, a sudden glimpse of a small face with an expression on it of a startled fawn scenting danger caused him an unpleasant twinge. This, however, was merely momentary. Lord Todmorden's nature, beneath all its eccentricities, was a kindly one; but he was sceptical on the subject of broken hearts, and to weigh a maiden's tears in the balance with the success of a life would have been to him folly only worthy of the love-lorn maiden herself.

"So that's the girl Stud jokes about, and told me his uncle wanted him to marry. She is magnificent," soliloquised Clive. "There's Stud talking to her too. There was a something in her manner which seemed to me to say, 'I'm the cleverest, handsomest person here,' until he spoke to her, and then there was a sudden change as if adding, 'except one.' I'm certain she's ready to fall over head and ears in love with him."

A sickening dread here came over Clive, and her blood turned chill as she contemplated the chance of a contest with such a powerful and magnificent rival as this stately, despotic, accomplished heiress. Certainly, it was in a great measure the dread that was father to the thought, but still Clive was right in one conjecture; Miss Torkingham had hosts of admirers, ripe, on the slightest encouragement, to become suitors—what heiress, *à fortiori*, what handsome heiress, has not?—but Dorrien was the only man she had ever felt she could fall in love with, and he of all men was the only one who had neither been attracted by her looks, impressed by her talents, nor allured by her wealth.

In the middle of his conversation with Miss Torkingham, which was of a very commonplace order for two such gifted

mortals, Dorrien caught sight of Clive's troubled countenance, and he was by her side in a moment, somewhat to Miss Torkingham's chagrin.

"What's the matter, Clive? You don't look happy, little woman?"

"Stud, I've been feeling jealous, horribly jealous, for the first time in my life, and I can't say it's pleasant."

"Well, what does it feel like?"

"Oh! horrid."

"Can't you describe the sensation? I don't know much about it myself, and I should like to have your idea."

"Well, as people say when they're at a loss for words, it beggars description. But just to give you a feeble idea of the feeling, I should compare it to being scooped out like a pumpkin and filled up with ice."

"Does it really?" laughed Dorrien. "Well, Othello himself couldn't have put it more forcibly than that. But, not being a pumpkin myself, I can't quite enter into the feeling. And who or what has been the cause of this fearful sensation?"

"She's very handsome, Stud, that Miss Torkingham, and so clever, and she likes you, I'm sure. Altogether, she seems so much more suited to you than I am; and a horrid dread seized me that if you had many opportunities of comparing the two of us, you couldn't help thinking so too."

"I'd as soon fall in love with Aunt Smack or the Encyclopædia Britannica," said Dorrien emphatically. "I give you my word I would. So don't go indulging in the scooped-out pumpkin sensation again. There's that eccentric old relative of mine conducting the terrible rival to the piano. She's going to sing, evidently; so 'look out for squalls.'"

A different fate attended Miss Torkingham to that which had befallen the previous performers, who had played or sung unheeded by any but their respective mammas. As she took her seat there was a hushed stillness, and a general

crowding round the piano. This homage, the enthusiasm of silence, the talented young lady received coolly, and prepared for the performance as if "stripping," in a pugilistic sense, for an encounter; while old Lord Todmorden fussily constituted himself a sort of second, and took her fan, her handkerchief, and her massive bracelets, as she divested herself of them one by one.

"Now, something worthy of you, my dear Miss Torkingham. Something instrumental to begin with."

Miss Torkingham smiled a smile of conscious power, and rattled her fingers over the keys as if just to let the piano know how thoroughly she was its mistress. Then she commenced in downright earnest. As she settled to her work, the performance, like Victor Hugo's gunner and the carronade, seemed gradually to assume the appearance of a struggle between two animate beings. The piano appeared to be endowed with life, and the whole thing looked like a regular set-to between it and the performer. The piano had no chance though. She rattled his ivories, she hit him a fearful *arpeggio* in the middle, she struck his tenderest chords, she ran up to his topmost note in a fierce chromatic till he shrieked, down to his lowest till he groaned, and at times she had him by the pedal till he roared again.

Wonder, if not admiration, was on nearly every countenance; and as to old Sir Piers, he seemed to have made up his mind, or as much as he had got, to give up the puzzle of his life there and then.

"Beautiful! magnificent! sublime!" uttered Lord Todmorden in ecstasies, and at the conclusion of the piece he stole a sly glance at his nephew. The old nobleman was overdoing his part, and his little game was gradually dawning upon Dorrien, who sat leaning back carelessly in a chair, surveying the scene with an air half-amused, half-contemptuous.

Then Miss Torkingham, by his lordship's special desire, sang a song, then another, and another. She sang in

French, Italian, and German, but not once did she deign to sing in her native tongue.

"Perhaps Miss Torkingham would favour you with a Japanese song, or some light little trifle in Hebrew," said Dorrien, as his uncle vented his admiration in loud tones to a bystander.

"Well, I daresay she could if she chose."

"Or perhaps she might improvise an oratorio on the spot on the confusion of tongues, and give it to you in the different dialects."

"Well, sir," said Lord Todmorden warmly, "I don't know that I would bet very heavily against her there. There is no limiting her talents. I shouldn't be surprised at anything she could do. Now, Miss Belmont, won't you favour us with something?" he asked, turning to Clive, who stood by.

She was nearly startled out of her senses at the bare idea. Performing after Miss Torkingham would have been disconcerting to many a professional. How much more so then to Clive, whose utmost skill placed her far short of even mediocrity? She had never had a singing lesson in her life; had never sung except to "Daddles," or a favoured few; did not know a song except a few simple ballads. An excuse was on her lips when Dorrien said in a low tone: "Try, Clive. I've a particular reason for wishing you to, and give them the simplest thing you know."

The "particular reason" shot through her mind. He did not want her to appear a foolish, simpering little idiot, stammering out vapid excuses about colds and no music. After all, it was not much to do for Stud's sake, and she'd do it; no matter if she showed but little skill, at all events there was something in coming forward boldly and doing her best. It was like making up one's mind to an operation, but Clive hardened her heart to it. She turned very pale, and pressed her hands together as she replied, "I shall be happy to do my best, Lord Todmorden."

Straightway, like a lamb to the slaughter, she was borne off by Lord Todmorden, with, to do him justice, quite as much politeness as he had shown Miss Torkingham.

"By gad, here's a sort of petticoat edition of David and Goliath! What a plucky little girl it is to enter the lists with the last champion!" said an old general to Colonel Belmont, as the two stood together, renewing an acquaintance of many years before.

"Bless my soul, it's Clive!" said the colonel, fairly staggered by his little daughter's temerity. And as he watched how the colour had faded out of her soft cheeks, and that her hands trembled as she drew off her gloves, the old soldier's heart beat faster than it had ever done when the enemy's guns were just opening fire—a ticklish moment even to the bravest. Almost as much taken aback was Dolly Jones, who was as confused as if called upon himself for a song or a speech, and stood twirling his imperial furiously with one hand, and nervously twiddling his waistcoat buttons with the other.

A short symphony from Clive did not promise very well. It sounded feeble and tame after what had gone before. It was like the tinkle of a child's rattle after the full crash of an orchestra. Miss Torkingham could stretch an octave as easily as a race-horse can cover twenty feet in its stride, while to Clive's small hand an octave meant merely a struggle between the thumb and little finger, in which one was bound to miss the right note. Lord Todmorden looked round as much as to say, "Be good enough to compare this slurring over of notes with the precision of the previous performance." Most of the listeners seemed quite sorry, and Dolly Jones, in his sympathetic nervousness, undid every button of his waistcoat from the top to the bottom. The symphony being got over, Clive commenced her song, and, though her voice trembled a little, every note was true and sweet. It was merely some little English ballad she was accustomed to sing to Daddles in the twilight; and, after

Miss Torkingham's Italian and German shakes and runs and trills, the simple air, sung in the sweet, untrained young voice, was like the change from the overpowering aroma of incense to the perfume of wild flowers on the summer breeze. The accompaniment, just a few commonplace chords, certainly lacked the brilliancy of Miss Torkingham's; but the piano, as if appreciating the soft touch after the hammering it had just had, gratefully gave out its sweetest tones in return, and the silence was as hushed as if Miss Torkingham herself had been performing.

As Clive concluded, and, with flushed cheeks, took shelter from the storm of praise under the lee of "Daddles," Lord Todmorden felt that the affair had taken quite a wrong direction altogether; and if he could have fathomed Dorrien's heart, as Clive gave him a look as much as to say, "I did my best for you, Stud," he would have had little cause to congratulate himself upon the success, so far, of his plot.

There was no chance of retrieving the evening either, for Miss Torkingham was due at a ball, and followed by Sir Piers, shortly took her departure. Several others followed, Colonel Belmont and his daughter amongst the number, and then there was a general exodus.

"I'd ask you to the smoking-room, Dolly, for a quiet weed together, but I want to have a private talk with my uncle," said Dorrien to Dolly, who was the last guest to leave; "I'm going to give the old boy a dressing."

## CHAPTER VIII.

### "GIVING THE OLD BOY A DRESSING."

SMOKING-ROOM, studio, workshop, lumber-room for the material productions of Lord Todmorden's crotchety brain —whatever it was, the reader knows the apartment. In the *chef-d'œuvre* of his inventive genius—the revolving-chair, ledge in front for his liquid and cigar-ash-holder, everything snug and ship-shape—sits the noble owner. In an ordinary easy-chair, half as complicated, twice as comfortable, with one leg swinging over the arm, sits his nephew, quietly puffing his cigar and biding his time.

"Upon my word, a wonderful girl that. Her brilliancy is positively dazzling," said Lord Todmorden, turning the handle of his revolving-chair, and directing himself point-blank at his nephew. "As a linguist, I have never heard her equal. No matter what language she attempts, she speaks it as though she were 'native and to the manner born.' Her German was wonderful. Did you notice her German, Stud?"

"Yes, capital."

"Yes, capital," repeated his lordship with a chuckle; "I am glad you thought so, for you're such a hard fellow to please. Capital, wasn't it?"

"Yes; never heard anything so suggestive of a spittoon in all my life; was nearly kicking a footstool towards her by the mere force of the suggestion."

"I'm afraid, Studholme, your military experiences have made you a little coarse. Your language at times smacks rather of the camp than of the court."

"Very likely. The soldier is generally more outspoken than the courtier, and I'm now going to give you a little of the former character. You don't imagine, do you, that I didn't see through your little game this evening at a very early stage of its development? And now let me tell you that it was as mean and petty as it has proved unsuccessful."

"How dare you address those words to me? It's lucky for you that in coolness I'm an iceberg," roared Lord Todmorden, who was much more like a volcano in active eruption, "or I should order you out of my house. Ten thousand devils, what do you mean?"

"Well, to give you a little more of that bluntness you don't approve of, I shouldn't go if you did until I had had my say. One retrieving point in your conduct this evening, which I was glad to see, was the clumsy way in which you bungled and overdid your part. It showed me that meanness and, I may say, treachery to a guest were at all events foreign to your nature. You asked Miss Belmont here that you might swamp her with the superior attainments and accomplishments of that Franco-Germano-Italian screech-owl."

"What do you mean, sir, by applying an epithet—a vile, compound, international sort of an epithet like that—to a friend of mine? I shan't allow it."

"I say you asked Miss Belmont here that you might make her ridiculous and contemptible in my eyes; might make me think I was doing a foolish thing in marrying her. And now let me tell you how far you have been successful. You made some one ridiculous and contemptible in my opinion, but it is not Miss Belmont; I never saw her to such advantage, never admired her so, never loved her as much—though I didn't previously think I could have loved her more—as when, with little more skill at her command than

just enough to carry her through a simple English ballad, she, a young girl unused to society, faced an audience of strangers belonging to the cold, selfish, snarling world of fashion—an audience in whose ears that accomplished phenomenon's fifty-guinea-a-lesson sort of Italian shriek was still ringing. It was more to ask of a young girl like her than it would be to ask you or me to march up to the cannon's mouth in cold blood. But she did it at one word from me; and she did it bravely. The very means you employed to loosen her hold on my heart have riveted it more strongly than ever. You've done just the very opposite to what you tried—the usual result, my dear sir, of old heads prescribing for young hearts. I begin to believe that old people after living much in the world—I don't mean the one eight thousand odd miles in diameter, but the one bounded by narrow prejudice and ruled by self-interest—undergo a radical change as regards their vital organs. Their hearts slide down into their stomachs or their pockets, and their brains take the place of their hearts."

All this time Lord Todmorden, though a silent, had not been a patient listener. He had been "Pish"-ing and "Pshaw"-ing and spluttering, and, I am sorry to add, occasionally indulging, *sotto voce*, in a little strong language.

"Well, sir, I suppose this infernal tirade, when shorn of its abuse and impertinence, means simply that you will marry Miss Belmont?"

Dorrien coolly nodded his head.

"And what, sir, do you think marriage with Miss Belmont means?"

"In my opinion, as near an approach to happiness as we can expect in this world. And now, just as a matter of idle curiosity, and not with the least idea of gaining anything of practical value—suppose you give me *your* opinion?"

"Well, sir—and, mark me, you can't outdo me in coolness," roared Lord Todmorden—"it means poverty in the first place, for I stop your allowance, and all you inherit

from my spendthrift brother is a paltry few hundreds a year, poverty, and that means to a proud, stuck-up, overbearing, I may say insolent, man like you, misery. It means loss of all your friends. How the devil you ever made one I don't know! But anyhow, it means loss of them."

"The reverse; it will mean the discovery of true ones. Those who drop off at the first breath of adversity, like rotten fruit from a tree, will have been no friends of mine. Better to have one who stands by you in adversity than five thousand false ones who fawn on you in prosperity."

"Pooh, sir; I repeat, pooh. Pooh-pooh-pooh! You were talking a little time ago—very wittily, as you thought, no doubt—about old people's brains sliding down into their pockets, or some such nonsense. Yours have gone a stage farther, sir. There's been a hole in *your* pocket, I should think; and you've dropped them altogether. I didn't expect such claptrap nonsense from you. You are the last man, I should have thought, to have uttered these crude and childish notions on the subject of friendship. I repeat, that your marriage means misery—misery while I'm alive and you're poor; misery still when I'm gone, and you inherit the family honours and estates. For with that little bread-and-butter miss you will be embarrassed in your position; she will be unequal to her station, and will be a clog on you. I regret that the family honour, which has been borne without spot or blemish for centuries, will be in your custody, when you have so little idea of what you owe to your future position."

During the whole of this stormy discussion, Dorrien had been, though his words look strong on paper, quite cool. At times he had even spoken with a careless and perfectly natural laugh. His face had never changed colour once, and the leg hanging carelessly over the arm of the chair had been swinging all through with the regularity of a clock pendulum. But now, at these slighting allusions to Clive Belmont, his face flushed for the first time, and the leg swung impatiently.

"What do you mean? Miss Belmont, in point of family, is my equal, if not my superior. All this harping on the unblemished spotlessness of the family honour and all that sort of nonsense is ridiculous, when we know that this same family honour rests on dishonour, sprang from dishonour, was born of dishonour. What bosh it all is! You strained at that very small gnat, my theory of friendship, while you're able to swallow this camel, this unclean beast, the family honour, with the greatest ease."

It must be here explained that the first holder of the title had been one of the numerous ennobled bastards of Charles II.

Lord Todmorden's wrath was terrible to see. He forgot all about his elaborate system of handles for regulating the revolutions of his wonderful chair, and adopted the simpler method of kicking his foot against the floor to bring himself into position for pouring point-blank into his nephew a broadside of denunciation in avengement of the outraged family honour. But he was not in a frame of mind to measure the required force, and he spun round, like a weathercock, to the topmost thread of his screw. Consequently, the first shot of the broadside went off in exactly the opposite direction to that intended; and as the screw had become jammed, his lordship's back was perforce kept turned to the foe, when all the time his soul was in arms, and thirsting for the fray.

"Allow me," said Dorrien, with a quiet laugh, as he leaned forward to assist his uncle, who was struggling desperately with the screw.

"Don't touch me, sir! Hands off! Don't dare to touch my—my—my mechanism!" roared Lord Todmorden, as he laid violent and trembling hands on the ledge in front, which detained him a prisoner. "Now, sir," he spluttered, as he burst through and confronted his nephew, "after that speech of yours, the same apartment cannot contain us. Either you or I must leave the room."

"Well, my dear uncle, as you suggested it, and don't seem as comfortable in it as I am, suppose *you* do!"

Lord Todmorden looked for a moment at the poker, and then rushed from the room, as if tearing himself away from a terrible temptation.

"What the deuce are you doing, sir?" he asked, as he suddenly came upon a footman stooping down in the hall.

"Tying my shoe, my lord."

"Confound you, sir! you're always tying your shoe," said his lordship, giving the man a kick, which ran through his frame like an electric shock, and sent the powder off his head in a miniature snowstorm.

"Nothing under a ten-pun' note will make a plaster for *that*," proudly soliloquised the haughty menial as he hastily withdrew.

The act probably *did* cost his lordship quite that, but it was dirt cheap at the price. It was a safety-valve which saved him from a fit of apoplexy, probably; and he experienced so much relief after it that he felt himself equal to having another shot at the enemy.

"I have come back, sir, to tell you, that to save you from the dishonour of inheriting the family title I shall do my utmost. I shall marry again, sir—my housekeeper, my cook, my scullery-maid, if I can't get any one else. There's no step to which I will not stoop to save you from the indignity."

"Why not Miss Torkingham, my lord?"

"By gad, sir, that's the first sensible remark you've made this evening!" said Lord Todmorden, pulling up his shirt collar and mincing out of the room with a suddenly acquired air of jauntiness—the sort of demeanour we may imagine in Froggy when he went a wooing, regardless of maternal wishes, and set off with his opera-hat.

* * * * *

When, a quarter of an hour afterwards, Dorrien passed through the hall on his way out, he encountered the

butler, who was evidently bursting with some strange intelligence.

"A hair-dresser is with his lordship, sir. Was routed out of bed, and brought here in a hansom from Bond Street; and now the brougham has been ordered round to take his lordship to Lady Agatha Pierpoint's, in Grosvenor Square."

"Lady Agatha Pierpoint's! By Jove! that's where the ball is *she* was going to," mentally remarked Stud, with a shrug of the shoulder and a careless laugh.

## CHAPTER IX.

### A TRYING TÊTE-À-TÊTE.

THE next morning, between twelve and one o'clock, Clive sat in the drawing-room of their temporary home in Clarges Street. She had been out for an early ride in the park with her father, and he had gone to the Senior United Service Club to read the papers before luncheon. Dorrien had not yet made his appearance, neither had he joined them as usual in the ride, and, as on this particular morning there was something special to talk about, she awaited his coming with even more than customary patience.

She took up the *Times* and read, or tried to read, steadily for half an hour. It was a labour of love in one sense. Since the chest-measurement of the British army had been reduced by one inch, the colonel was great on the subject of the Decline and Fall of the British Empire; and when he talked about the trade leaving the country, etc. etc., Clive liked to be able to join in with something about "coal," or "iron," or "finance," just to please him.

A knock at the street door raised her hopes.

"There he is!"

A peep through the window dashed them again.

"No, it isn't. It's that horrid Captain Garstang, I think. I can tell him by his curly hat. Stud would never wear a hat like that. Dolly might, certainly. But then Dolly wouldn't whistle popular tunes on the door-step when he was going to make a call."

Having settled this point, she ran to the door with the intention of signalling "not at home" over the stairs to the servant, but the time taken up in settling the ownership of the curly hat had been fatal, and Garstang was already within the portals.

She had just time to resume her seat, and compose her features into an expression of sublime innocence of all such acts as peeping through windows and signalling over heads of stairs, when the visitor was announced.

"How de do, Miss Belmont?" said Garstang, entering in his free-and-easy style. "Evidently none the worse for your exertions last night.

"You're looking as fresh as the morn, dar——

"Ah, we had better not continue the song."

"I am sorry papa is not in, Captain Garstang," said Clive, purposely disclaiming any idea of the visit being to her.

"Can't say *I* am. In fact, I knew he was out. Came along past the Senior, and saw him just going into that hot-bed of fogyism and inhospitality. Can't ask a fellow to dine there or even give him a glass of sherry, and the old fossils pretend the rule is most irksome to them. Why the deuce do they make it, then? Made a bet with a fellow once I'd get a liquor out of them. Got long odds, precious long odds, or I wouldn't have had anything to do with it. Fell down in a fit on the door-step, with both hands over my heart, and feebly murmuring 'brandy.' Three old generals and two admirals dragged me across the road to a chemist's opposite, and gave me, ugh! tincture of cardamoms. Tincture of cardamoms, by gad! It rankles in my bosom to this hour. Lost my bet; will have my revenge though. My professional ambition is to become a field-officer, join the Senior, and walk up and down the reading-room in creaking boots for two hours every day. Will do it, too, by Jove! Brought you some tickets for Hurlingham next

Saturday. Come and see me shoot, and if I'm in form you just back me, and you'll win enough gloves to carry you through the season. I'll give you the straight tip if it's one of my days."

"Thank you, Captain Garstang, I'm engaged."

"Well, they'll do for any other day."

"Thank you very much, but you'd better keep them. I'm sure I shall always have some engagement which I shall prefer to seeing you mangle the poor little creatures."

"No, never mangle my birds—only duffers do that. Always kill 'em dead, I assure you. Ha, ha, ha! Can't be very wrong, you know. Your friend Dorrien shoots, or used to shoot, at Hurlingham sometimes. Had you there, eh?"

Clive coloured up crimson, and was hardly logical in her way of getting out of the difficulty.

"Not at all, Captain Garstang; I'm sure, if I were a pigeon, I'd much sooner be shot by Captain Dorrien than by you."

"That's beautiful! Oh, little Belmont, little Belmont, you are an amoosin' little cuss, as Artemus——"

"Captain Garstang!"

"Miss Belmont!"

"You're forgetting yourself!"

"Very likely. 'Twas ever thus from childhood's hour.' Self has always been my last thought. I am always forgetting myself. I am the most unselfish creature in the world. But, come, I shan't be a nasty tease any longer. I must really congratulate you on your success last night. 'Pon my word you quite took the shine out of that bright constellation, Miss Torkingham, and were the star of the evening, beautiful star.

"Beautiful star-ar,
Shine on your Gar-ar-
Stang, who does twang
His musical, tuneful guitar."

As Captain Garstang sang these words to the well-known tune, he struck the conventional attitude of a gay troubadour, and used his riding-cane as a guitar. Clive would have preferred using it as a horsewhip.

"What do you think of that for an impromptu effort, eh?"

"I did not think of its being impromptu, Captain Garstang, so much as something else beginning with the same syllable," replied Clive, who did not at all appreciate the pleasantry. The fact was, the previous night had been a "heavy" one at Captain Garstang's club, and, as he himself would have termed it, "the liquor was not yet quite dead in him."

"Ha, ha, ha! You and I are always having a little bit of a sparring-match, aren't we? I tell you what it is, though, you've established rather a raw amongst the old girls with daughters. Some of them are down on you, I can tell you, and you'd stand as much chance in their clutches as a poor little mousey-pousey amongst a lot of tabbies."

"May I take the liberty of asking Captain Garstang how I have incurred the displeasure of these high and mighty dames?" asked Clive, mounting a pair of conversational stilts as a hint to Captain Garstang that an elevation of *his* style would be an improvement.

He did not take the hint, however, though he noticed it. On the contrary, he became still more objectionable. He was evidently, in his own language, "taking a rise out of the little Belmont filly."

"Well, you know the fact is, you're monopolising a great deal too much of that sarcastic bear who, from the fact of his being old Toddy's heir, is looked upon as rather a prize in the matrimonial market; and that's a thing, you know, women can't forgive in one another."

"Your language is so very obscure to-day, Captain Garstang, that my share in the conversation seems to be

confined to asking for explanations. May I ask who the sarcastic bear is?"

"Really, now, that's too good! Upon my soul, that's rich! As if you didn't know. Why, even if your conscience doesn't tell you, my description ought to. Or, perhaps, you think 'boor' would suit Captain Dorrien better than 'bear.'"

"If Captain Dorrien, when addressing you, Captain Garstang, has been boorish and unmannerly, I most heartily admire his tact in so thoroughly adapting himself to the society he was in. My only surprise is, that he should have condescended as much, for, in my opinion, you are even beneath his contempt."

"Upon my word, this is good! This is capital! I'm afraid the bear has been whispering soft nothings into your ear. It's really quite amusing to imagine him the victim of a tender passion. I should have thought it had been doing violence to his nature. Beware of a bear's hug, Miss Belmont. Ha, ha! It's not exactly the tenderest of caresses. Besides, I tell you what it is, the old boy won't stand it. Old Hot Toddy will boil over, and you'll be the little golden pippin of the row in *that* house."

For a long time Clive had been very shaky on her conversational stilts, and now the last shot brought her tumbling down.

"You're a cowardly snob, Captain Garstang."

"Ha, ha! You'll excuse me, Miss Belmont, but really I must repeat what I've told you before, that a passion becomes you amazingly. Really it does. I must think of something else about the sarcastic bear, for I see that's a safe draw."

With burning cheeks and flashing eyes, Clive rose and rang the bell.

"Now, Captain Garstang, your visit—if your intrusion here, with apparently no object in view but studied insult, can be called by that name—will not last much longer; and

before it comes to an end, let me warn you that the servants will have strict orders never to admit you if you should call, and if you happen to meet me out of doors, you can save yourself the trouble of taking off your hat."

"Well, it shan't be teased any more. We'll make it up; and tell the servant when he comes in to pull up the blinds, or water the plants, or do something or other. I shan't be a nasty, great, big, unkind thing any longer, and make its angry little passions rise; and it mustn't tap its little tootsy-wootsy on the ruggy-buggy in a ragey-pagey."

The servant here made his appearance.

"Open the door for Captain Garstang."

Garstang began to think that "the little Belmont filly" in a passion was not such a screaming farce after all. However, he tried to appear as if he still thought so; but the attempt was a very lame one, and, with a forced laugh, he wished her good morning, and swaggered out of the room.

He was a foul-mouthed man, was Garstang, particularly where women were concerned; and as he walked down the street the abuse he levelled at Clive's innocent head would have disgraced a bargee—or rather, perhaps, I should say, would have put him on his mettle.

"Cursed little prig!" he concluded, as he entered his club, "she takes her cue from that great bumptious brute, Dorrien. He's at the bottom of it all——"

The remainder of his speech was not fit for ears polite.

"What's the matter, Gar, old cock?" asked a "pal" and bird-of-a-feather who stood smoking on the steps of the club.

"Matter! Why, that I owe a fellow one, and I'd like to pay him, only I don't know how."

"Sell him a horse, Gar; sell him a horse."

"Curse him! no; he's too wide awake for that."

## CHAPTER X.

### A LOVE MATCH.

THE flush had not faded from Clive's face, nor the fire from her eyes, when Dorrien entered.

"How late you are, Stud, this morning."

"Why, what's the matter? You look as if you had been having a fight with some one."

"I've been in an awful rage, Stud. That abominable Captain Garstang has been paying a visit here, and he does annoy me so."

"Why, you don't mean to say he has been guilty of any impertinence?" asked Dorrien, his brow growing black.

"Oh! no, dear; no, not in the least," hurriedly replied Clive, as visions of pistols for one and coffee for two floated through her imagination. "I'm like you, Stud; you know, I can't be civil to people I dislike, and the more uncivil I am to him the more——well, not rude, Stud, no, not a bit, I can't say he gets rude; but the true fact is, he will treat me as if I were a child, and that does make me so wild."

"Never mind him; he is not worth getting into a rage about. He'll be a good riddance when he is out of the regiment, and it's my firm opinion he won't last long. The reason why I'm so late is, that I've been paying my lawyer a visit, Clive," continued Dorrien, with a careless dismissal of the Garstang subject.

"What for Stud?" asked Clive with a startled look.

There is something unpleasant and alarming in the sound of "lawyer" to a loving young heart. The family lawyer has been the sexton of many a courtship, and tolled the death-knell of many a love which has come to an untimely end.

"Well, I'm afraid that interview with papa in the study will have to be gone through again. The course of true love never did run smooth, you know, Clive, and there's what they call a 'hitch.'"

"Stud!" Clive grew deadly pale and trembled.

"I wanted to know exactly what I myself am worth. It was something so small compared to what my allowance and expectations were that I hardly counted it before. But now both allowance and expectations have melted into thin air."

"Why, what do you mean, Stud? What has happened?"

"Well, my uncle is going to be married immediately."

"Going to be married! Since when?"

"Since about two or three o'clock this morning, I should say. And now, Clive, all that I have of my own, all that I can count upon for the present and the future, is five hundred a year, which was my mother's settlement. My father was a younger son, and what he had he ran through. And now, little woman, what do you say to the change?"

"You must answer me a question first, Stud," she said, with downcast eyes.

A look of keen, of bitter disappointment swept over his face. Had he not rather expected an unquestioning and cheerful acceptance of the news? Had the worship of Mammon, then, crept into even this young heart? Had one London season been enough to blight this innocent little flower? Avaunt then, for ever and ever, all faith in woman's pureness of heart.

"Your question?"

"What do *you* say to the change, Stud? What difference does it make in *you?* How much do *you* care?"

"For my own self?"

"Yes, for your *own* self, putting every one else out of the question?"

"Not two straws," he said, snapping his fingers.

"Neither do I, Stud," she exclaimed, with an imitation of the action and rushing into his arms. "What difference, what change *could* it make in me, except perhaps to make me happier? for I may have more opportunities of showing my love for you in poverty than in wealth."

Doubt and disappointment no longer clouded Dorrien's face. There was a rebound of feeling, all the stronger for the passing doubt, and Clive's small form was caught up in his arms.

"Oh, Stud, how could you frighten me so?" she said, nestling up to him and speaking betwixt laughing and crying. "I thought you were gradually working round to 'prudence,' and 'didn't exactly see your way,' and 'better for both,' and all that sort of thing; which is only a polite way people have for saying they're tired of each other; and I was hardening my heart to be able to tell you that I absolved you from your promise, and that I hoped you would find someone that would love you as truly as I had, and all the rest of it. Altogether, I was going to be very noble and dignified, though I daresay it would have ended in my kicking my heels about in a fit of hysterics. But, Stud, I must beg your pardon for ever thinking that you could have done anything so mean and cruel."

"We'll cry quits about that, little woman," said Dorrien, "for I wronged you too. I didn't understand what you were driving at, and did you the injustice to think your feelings had changed with my change of fortune."

"Stud, Stud, how could you? I only wanted to know how much you cared before I answered your question. That was all."

"Of course it was, and I ought to be kicked for thinking

anything else. But now there's the colonel to be told. I wonder what he'll say about it."

"Do you think, Stud, it would afford darling old Daddles any gratification to see me die by inches?"

"Not exactly."

"Quite sure?"

"Yes."

"Well, you may make yourself quite sure about his line of conduct. And now, having settled the important point that 'as you loves me as I loves you, naught shall part our love in two' (Tennyson), let me hear the wonderful piece of news. You may imagine what my feelings must have been, Stud, to have stifled all curiosity. But now it has come on with redoubled force."

"Well, my uncle is going to be married; next week, probably."

"Lord Todmorden going to be married next week! Why, if you had told me Aunt Smack had eloped with Dolly, I shouldn't have been much more surprised. You didn't know anything about it last night?"

"Neither did he."

"What an extraordinary thing! Did he say anything about it to you after we left?"

"Well, he certainly did mention the subject in a sort of a way," replied Dorrien, with a smile.

"Now tell me everything, Stud. What does that smile mean? Thereby hangs a tale, I'm sure. Out with it. What led to the subject?"

"Well, we had a slight disagreement on a certain point, and——"

"Stop, Stud. Don't slur over that so quickly. *I* was the certain point. I know I was. I was the bone of contention."

"Don't flatter yourself. It was nothing more or less than the family honour that we split upon. He was trying to cram it down my throat in great coarse lumps, and I

simply refused to swallow the trash. On this, he lost his temper, and announced his intention of marrying; and the last I saw of him was in the act of pulling up his shirt-collar with quite a rakish air, as he went out of the room on his way to propose to Miss Torkingham, at Lady Agatha Pierpoint's ball."

"Miss Torkingham! And do you mean to say that she is going to marry that old frump? Oh, I beg your pardon, Stud!"

"Don't mention it. I don't know for certain who the lady may be; but, from what passed last night and my knowledge of his impetuous character, I'm convinced that he is engaged to be married at the present moment, and that he will be too honourable to back out of it."

"But what *did* pass last night, Stud? explain that."

"Why, you obstinate little atom of pertinacity, didn't I tell you something about that vain shadow called family honour?"

"There's no use fencing about it, Stud. I know I was the cause. They say a woman's at the bottom of every mischief, and I'm the woman at the bottom of this. I'm very sorry for it. Dear me, it's a terrible thing to think of—what a firebrand I must be. Here I've set papa and Aunt Smack, you and Lord Todmorden, brother and sister, uncle and nephew, all by the ears, and then I've had a pitched battle with Captain Garstang, and I daresay Miss Torkingham hates me like poison. I'm sure I don't want to fight or to be fought about, but they will do it."

At this point Colonel Belmont entered.

"Daddles, prepare yourself for a piece of news."

"Nothing very sad, evidently," said the colonel.

"Well, *I* don't think it is, and *Stud* doesn't think it is, and *you* won't think it is, unless you're growing mercenary in your old age. Lord Todmorden is going to be married, and he's quarrelled with Stud and cut him off with a shilling, and it's going to be a case of love in a cottage."

Albeit the colonel was not in the least "growing mercenary in his old age," he failed to see a joke in the circumstance, and turned to Dorrien with a serious air.

"That's about it, colonel. My uncle has suddenly made up his mind to be married; and in consequence of some words we had on family matters, there is now an estrangement between us. It has happened very suddenly, but you know enough of Lord Todmorden not to be surprised at any sudden whim he may take into his head and carry out with blind impetuosity. I would move heaven and earth to prevent the match, for his sake, not for my own; but a wrong construction would be put on my motives; and so peculiar is his temperament that opposition or advice would do more harm than good. Now, colonel, to put the matter roughly before you at once, about five hundred a year represents the whole of my fortune. Certainly, I may yet succeed my uncle, but that must not be counted on. You are too old a soldier to reckon on an off chance. What do you say?"

"Dorrien," said the colonel, "when I promised you my child I was not influenced one jot by those prospects which you now tell me are no longer yours. I looked to the man, not to the surroundings of title and wealth. I would sooner give her to you with five hundred a year than to any man I ever met with fifty times five hundred. From the moment you first joined, I have had my eye on you. To me there was a fascination in watching a strength of character wonderful in one so young, and although at first I in a measure disliked you—for there was an independence about you which, in one so junior, was irritating to a punctilious military mind—I respected you; and now my confidence in you is unbounded, and true affection has taken the place of dislike. You will have enough to live happily on. It will be more than I had when I married her mother, for my father was then still alive; and God grant you such happiness as ours was when I was a poor captain, and may He spare you the misery which fell on us both when we were comparatively

rich. My income, counting my pay, which perhaps is hardly worth taking into consideration, is close on two thousand. Now, an old soldier like me wants little more than his barrack quarters, with a camp-bed and a tub in them, and enough money to pay his mess bill, and have a few pounds in his pocket. The rest shall be yours and Clive's——don't interrupt, let me have my say, Dorrien. And when my soldiering is over, all I ask you in return is to give me standing room for my camp-bed, and allow me to hang up my old sword in your home."

"My dear colonel," replied Dorrien, "the last has always been an understood thing with us. But as regards the financial question, we must devise some other plan."

"I put it to you as a man of sense, Dorrien—a man with eyes that can see and ears that can hear—the money, over and above my personal wants, is no use to me without Clive. I have no want for it. I simply could not spend it. What good will it do there, accumulating at my banker's? I do not think, as it seems to me many old people do, that I shall be able in the spirit to look over the shoulder of each of my friends as he reads my will in the *Illustrated London News*, and chuckle as I hear him say, 'Halloa, old Belmont was worth more than I thought!' I do not expect this privilege will be granted to me hereafter, and I should not appreciate it if it were to be. Don't cross me in this, Studholme. Don't, I beg of you."

There was some further discussion, but Dorrien was at last obliged to surrender.

"There, that's settled; we won't talk about that any longer," said Colonel Belmont. "I have some important news, too, for you both. I met the quartermaster-general this morning, and he tells me that there has been a change regarding the Indian reliefs, and that the regiment is to go out next autumn instead of the following one."

"Oh, Daddles, don't go; don't go, darling! Sell out at once," said Clive, throwing her arms round him.

"It won't be for long, my child. I've a strange longing to see India once more. Its associations are not all unhappy ones, and there is a little spot of Indian ground, often in my dreams now, that I should like to see again—— There, there! old people can't help looking back, but 'forward' is the motto for the young. You will stay, my child. Thank God, for giving you a protector, in whose care I can leave you without one single fear or misgiving. In two years or so I shall give up soldiering, and then, please God, if all goes well, I shall be with you again."

"Let us go back then, Daddles, to the old regiment. I've had enough of London gaiety. I couldn't enjoy it now. Let us have as much of the old sort of life as we can for the short time we shall be together. Let us go back to-morrow, Daddles; do!"

The colonel did not hold out very long on this point. Assuredly, London gaiety had no charm for him when it had ceased to have any for Clive, and, with soldier-like promptitude, he promised her that they should return the very next day.

After luncheon, there was a more lengthened council, which resulted in the following: Dorrien was to retire from the service, and his papers were to be sent in at once. The engagement was to be "given out," and the wedding was to take place before the embarkation of the regiment for India.

Later in the afternoon, the colonel gave way under Clive's continued entreaties, and he promised that he would exchange into a regiment remaining at home. That night Dorrien returned to Aldershot. Before leaving town he received a letter from Lord Todmorden, which ran as follows:

"You have had enough opportunities of judging my character to know, by this time, that every action of my life is the result of calm deliberation. So quickly with me is decision formed, and so promptly on decision does action

follow, that to many I may appear hasty. You, however, from your closer knowledge of my character, will be aware that the rapidity with which my plans are invariably formed and carried out is to be attributed rather to the fact that, where other men's brains would be clouded by passion or excitement, I am always cool and collected."

Dorrien thought, with a smile, of Burns' words,

> Oh! wad some power the giftie gie us,
> To see ourselves as others see us,

and continued:

"You will not be surprised, therefore, after what passed last night, to hear—and I think it is only fair to take the earliest opportunity of letting you know it—that I am engaged to be married. I took your advice regarding Miss Torkingham, as far as in me lay—that is to say, I went straight to Lady Agatha's ball, and offered her my hand, which she did me the honour to refuse. The next young lady I conferred the compliment upon pleaded a previous engagement—in fact, is going to be married to-morrow. At the third time of asking, I was successful in securing an exceedingly fine girl as the future Lady Todmorden. She is a daughter of Lord Ballinasloe, an Irish peer. There was a slight difficulty at first, but the course of true love never does run smooth. It appears she was already engaged to a cousin—a young subaltern, who has recently been stationed near their place, in county Wicklow—and, not having caught my name when I was introduced, she repelled my advances with virtuous scorn; but on hearing who I was from a passer-by, who happened to address me at the moment, the noble girl threw over every consideration, and was mine. She stands at least five foot nine—judging roughly from the fact that when we met in the mazy figures of the lancers or quadrille, I could feel her breath playing on the top of my head—and is magnificently proportioned. Altogether I congratulate you and myself. "T."

The greater part of the above was read by the fitful light of a railway lamp, as Dorrien travelled down to the camp. Not many minutes after he had thrust it into his pocket, and transferred his attention to an evening paper, the following paragraph, an extract from one of the journals which chronicle such small beer, caught his eye:

"An alliance is about to be contracted between Lord Todmorden, one of the most accomplished and versatile peers of the day, and the Honourable Norah Cresslington, sixth daughter of Lord Ballinasloe. We learn from an eminently trustworthy source that the match is one of sincere attachment on both sides, and that the engagement is of long standing."

## CHAPTER XI.

### DETECTION.

THE train by which Dorrien journeyed to Aldershot was that one known as the "Cold Meat," which, with a morbid leaning to the ghastly, is dismally supposed—chiefly by young ladies who get their information from military partners of tender age—to convey corpses to Woking Cemetery for interment. Not to any such ghastly freight, however, does it owe its name. It carries nothing more dreadful than a portion of the beef and mutton for the morning's issue to the troops in camp, and a few belated and grumbling officers, for whose behoof the company courteously couple on a first-class carriage.

Travelling by the "Cold Meat" is about as depressing as anything in the way of locomotion can be. It starts in the dead of night from Nine Elms Station, and to get to it is in itself a work of difficulty and some danger. There is no lighted platform to step from; the "Cold Meat" stands ready for its journey in the midst of a labyrinth of rails, some acres in extent, over which the traveller is guided by a sleepy porter with a dim lantern. If you accomplish this part of the undertaking without dislocating your ankle over a rail, or barking your shin against a "point," or narrowly escaping a little juggernautic business in connection with a shunting coal-truck or two, you may consider yourself tolerably lucky, and gratitude should be your predominant feeling as you

take your seat in the compartment. Here, however, things are not very cheerful. The passengers are never in the best of tempers. They are all officers on their way to Aldershot, most of whom have been holding the cup of pleasure to their lips up to the last moment, and have been torn away from the "primrose path of dalliance" to tread the "steep and thorny road of duty," which, with them, generally leads in the direction of the "Long Valley." Or, perchance, some have missed the last train from Waterloo, and are in the consequent pleasant frame of mind. No one travels by the "Cold Meat" if he can help it. When it gets under weigh, which is a matter of uncertainty, the rate of progression favours the idea that the engine-driver believes in that ghastly tradition concerning the corpses for Woking Cemetery, and is adapting his pace to the funereal nature of the occasion. The consequence is, that when the train creeps into Aldershot Station the passengers find themselves well into the small hours. There is no flyman about—his importunities, even his extortions, would be regarded with delight now—and the traveller, cramped, sleepy, and chilled, has to walk to his destination.

I am particular in recording that it was by this train Dorrien travelled, for it was the trifling circumstance from which mighty consequences sprang. Had he journeyed by any other—by the last one from Waterloo at night, or the first one in the morning—he would have missed a moment which may be described as the turning-point in the lives of several of our characters.

It was about three o'clock in the morning as he reached the lines occupied by his regiment. Nothing broke the stillness of the camp, except an occasional faint chorus or a shout of laughter from some distant mess-house, betokening that some regiment was "making a night of it," or the challenges of the sentries.

As Dorrien passed through the dark rows of huts, his attention was attracted by a light in Dolly Jones' window.

"What's Dolly burning the midnight oil for, I wonder? The careless old beggar has probably gone to sleep with his candle lighted. There must be some very vigilant tutelary saint watching over this camp, or it would be burned down about once a month."

Thus soliloquising, Dorrien walked up to the window with the intention of peeping through to see if his conjecture were right. A glance through the carelessly-drawn curtains told him he was not. Dolly was wide-awake in one sense, though very much the reverse in another. He and Garstang were playing *écarté*; the former with his face, the latter with his back, to the window.

Dorrien's footsteps had been lost in the tramp of a "Relief," which happened to be passing at the time, and the two players continued unconscious of observation.

"Luck's dead against you now, Dolly, old man," said Garstang, playing a card and taking up a trick. "That makes me——"

The door was opened unceremoniously, and Dorrien entered.

"Hallo, old fellow," said Dolly, his open countenance brightening up in spite of luck being so dead against him. "I suppose you've come down by the 'Cold Meat.' By Jove! did you see that paragraph in the evening paper about your uncle? I'm just finishing this rubber, and then I'm game for a talk about it."

"You had better not play any more, Dolly," said Dorrien quietly.

"Why not?"

"Because the man you are playing with cheats."

Dolly dropped his cards and looked all eyes and mouth. Garstang sprang to his feet.

"Liar! You shall eat your words before you leave this room. By Heaven, you shall!"

"Bosh!" said Dorrien contemptuously. "The walls of these Aldershot huts are thin, and I'd advise you to moderate

these paroxysms of virtuous indignation a little. They'll do you more harm than good, though it's not for your sake, but the sake of the regiment, I warn you. I saw him, Dolly, through the window; I saw him deliberately cheat you."

Garstang turned deadly pale, and his bloodless lips quivered; but he still showed fight.

"I appeal to you, Jones. Are the words of a man who on his own showing is a spy and a sneak, a man who creeps up to a window and plays the part of an eavesdropper, to be taken against mine?"

"For goodness' sake, Dorrien, be careful how you bring such an accusation," said Dolly, looking infinitely more distressed than even Garstang himself. "You might have been mistaken, you know——"

"I denounce him as a cheat because I *saw* him, Dolly, I tell you. Examine those cards he's been playing with if you want any additional evidence."

Garstang became a shade paler, and he raised his hand as if to clasp his brow in despair, but he recovered himself in time to turn the action off into a careless movement of running his fingers through his hair.

The motion was not lost on Dolly, and while it carried conviction—if conviction he needed—to his mind, it also carried pity to his soft heart.

"He is in your power, Dorrien. Be merciful," he pleaded.

"Upon my soul," said Garstang with a forced laugh, "this is getting too rich. You're not yet retained for the defence, old fellow. I am quite able to defend myself from a trumped-up charge, thank you."

"Now, look here," said Dorrien, "you're on a useless tack. You're a man of the world, in the worst sense of the phrase—card-sharpers generally are—and you will at once see the best terms you can make for yourself. I am on the point of leaving the regiment, and sorry should I be, if almost my last act in it was the creation of such a scandal as your

exposure would bring about. To spare the old corps such a disgrace, I've a proposition to make. What has occurred in this room within the last few moments will never go farther —you're with me there, Jones? (Dolly eagerly acquiesced) —if you accept my terms. You will now in this room, before Jones and myself, write out your application to be allowed to retire from the service, and also apply for leave until your name shall appear in the Gazette. Further, as I should not be doing my duty to society at large, were I to allow a continuance of the facilities for prosecuting your card-playing amongst gentlemen, which membership of one or two good London clubs affords, I must take effectual measures to prevent you from including this very lucrative field in your future operations. You belong, I know, to a couple of service clubs, and, I believe, one or two others in town, and I shall require you to write, also before Jones and myself before we leave this room, a letter to each secretary, withdrawing your name from the list of members. And recollect, if at any future period I find you have withheld from me the name of any club you belong to now, I shall expose you."

"And suppose I tell you to go to the devil with your conditions?"

"Well, if that's your high polite for a refusal of them, suppose you do—I report the whole thing to the commanding officer, and nothing can save you from being tried by general court-martial and cashiered."

"The members of a general court-martial might not be quite so easily brought over to your view as Jones has been," sneered Garstang. "It is from beginning to end a foul invention, which would crumble away before impartial investigation. Besides, at the worst, it would only be your word against mine, and your conduct as a listener and a spy, as your own evidence would prove you to be, would not raise you particularly high in the estimation of the court."

Of course, Dorrien could have explained away such

charges as eavesdropping and spying; but it was beneath him to notice these straws Garstang was grasping at.

"It would not be a case of only my word against yours. If Jones will be good enough to look under the table where you were sitting, he will pick up a little additional evidence which would be conclusive. A court-martial, with all its clumsy procedure, is a very just one, and no Old Bailey quibble would get you off. There is a saying in the army, which you of course know: 'If I were guilty, I should like to be tried by a civil court; if I were innocent, by a court-martial.' You, no doubt, would prefer the former tribunal. Now, I have placed both courses plainly before you; choose which you'll adopt. Bury to-night's secret for ever, or be ignominiously dismissed from the service and branded as a swindler."

Had a deadly weapon been in Garstang's hand at the moment, he might have been branded as a murderer as well. It was impossible to put the wild tumult of his thoughts into words.

"Dolly, give me a piece of foolscap," said Dorrien.

Dolly obeyed, like one in a horrible nightmare.

"Now," said Dorrien, as he folded the paper into half margin, "which is it to be? Am I to write on this a report to the commanding officer, or are you to apply for permission to leave the service?"

It was all Garstang could do to restrain himself from flying at his accuser's throat in a frenzy of hatred and rage; but he sufficiently recovered himself to feel that this would only make matters worse. With his facial muscles working from suppressed fury, he managed to get his words out with a tolerable show of self-possession.

"Though feeling all the scorn and contempt for your vile accusation which a man conscious of his own innocence naturally feels, I shall not stand a court-martial, for I've not the slightest doubt that you would move heaven and earth, or rather I should say the other place, to bring a mass of

false evidence before the court which would crush me. I believe that half the regiment would come forward at your bidding and swear me guilty. The way Jones has gone over to your side opens my eyes to that. Though innocent, I shall accept, as if I were guilty, the alternative you offer, sooner than have my name dragged down into the dirt by a court-martial on such a charge. I shall not be the first victim to a foul conspiracy laid by an unprincipled scoundrel and supported by weak dupes. Here, give me the paper. Lend me your Queen's Regulations, Jones. Let's see what the form is."

Dolly handed the small red book, which to some extraordinary military minds comprises all that's worth reading in this world, and Garstang, after lighting a cigar by way of keeping up appearances, proceeded to copy out the form of application for retirement from the service.

Dorrien and Dolly looked on in silence—the former with an unmoved, the latter with a troubled countenance; and for some moments nothing was heard but the scraping of Garstang's pen as it travelled rapidly over the paper, bringing his military career to a close, word by word.

"There," he said, with feigned carelessness, as he signed his name and pushed the paper on one side; "precious glad I made up my mind. It's only anticipating my intention by a month or two—cursed hot place, India—exile—buried alive, and I had made up my mind to leave before the regiment embarked; so you need not flatter yourself that *you've* turned me out of the service."

"Now, you'll be good enough to write to the different clubs you belong to, taking your name off each and every one," said Dorrien.

To Garstang this was, if possible, a more bitter pill than the last, but he was obliged to swallow it; there was no wriggling from under the screw with that iron hand upon it; and one by one he severed his connection with three well-known clubs. To a betting, pool and card playing man about

town, like Garstang, a man vain of his worldly wisdom, and proud of the petty little social triumphs it occasionally brought, the step was a sacrifice of all that made life profitable and enjoyable to him. It was closing the gates of an earthly Paradise against himself; it was cutting the very ground of his social standing from under his feet. But there was no help for it. Better to let Society think he had given her up, than to let her fling him away from her capricious bosom. He might under cover of friendship cheat a man of his wife, but he must not cheat him at cards; Society could not stand that—it was stretching even her elastic moral code a little too far. Anything, then, but exposure.

On concluding the galling task he rose to quit the room, and on reaching the door he turned a white face and flashing eyes on Dorrien.

"You and the regimental coalition that I feel convinced there is at your back have been too much for me. I never got on in this accursed regiment, except with Jones there, and he deserted me at the first breath of calumny. I have to thank you for all this. We hated each other from the first, and shall to the last. The game has been in your hands now, and a diabolical, villanous game it has been; but I swear, as there is a heaven above me, I shall be quits with you some day."

Dorrien vouchsafed no reply. He looked on the threats as he would have looked on a stage villain who throws his cloak over his shoulder, strikes an attitude, and says, "Aha! the time will come." There was a quiet, contemptuous smile on his face.

Garstang quitted the room without another word. Instead of going to his own quarters across the narrow passage, he went outside into the open air, as if the small hut could not hold him in his rage. The dawn was just getting the better of the black night, and, in the sickly light, his livid face, distorted with passion, startled the sentries on

their posts, as he strode past them, grinding his teeth and muttering deep curses. His fury, impotent for the present, found a vent in the black revengeful future, and with terrible blasphemy he invoked the aid of heaven itself in the plans of vengeance.

The bugles and trumpets sounding the reveille throughout the camp recalled him to the necessity of action, and he repaired to his quarters and occupied himself with getting his private papers and documents together, until his servant should be dressed and ready to pack up. It was his intention to get leave from the officer commanding in Colonel Belmont's absence, and to quit that very morning and for ever the hated scene of his downfall.

He had not been many minutes employed when Dolly Jones walked across the passage and knocked at the door.

"Come to remind me of that bill he backed for me, I suppose," thought Garstang, as he accorded an ungracious permission to enter.

It was in no selfish spirit, however, that Dolly came to him. That bill transaction had gone clean out of his head, and there was a benevolence in his face and a softness in his tones not usual in men on such an errand as Garstang, in his own sordidness, ascribed to his visitor.

"Can I do anything for you, Garstang? You may wish to leave this as soon as possible, and any arrangements, such as selling your horses or having your heavy baggage sent after you, I shall be only too ready to undertake." Garstang smiled contemptuously at the idea of Dolly Jones selling a horse. "And," continued Dolly, "I should like, too, to assure you and make you feel quite easy that what has passed to-night is safe in our keeping. You need never have any fear on that score."

"In what spirit do you come with these offers?" asked Garstang, whose *rôle* was still that of injured innocence. "Is it sympathy with an injured man, or a sort of righteous,

maudlin forbearance to one you consider a detected swindler?"

"Neither," replied Dolly. "I come simply in my own bungling way to try and lessen the agony of mind you must feel, and to tell you that——"

"Well, as the 'agony of mind' I feel is simply self-congratulation at having got tolerably clear of a base conspiracy, you're at liberty to bestow your condolence on some more fitting object. Good morning. I am rather busy now and should like to be left alone."

"I am sorry you don't take what I've said in the spirit it was offered," said Dolly. "Good-bye," and Dolly held out his hand.

Garstang turned his back, and Dolly quietly went away.

Garstang got his leave and left the regiment. It was generally supposed that he had been hard hit on the turf, and that he had been forced to sell his commission to meet his debts of honour; an opinion that neither Dolly nor Dorrien ever, by word or look, gainsaid.

## CHAPTER XII.

### CASTLES IN THE AIR.

THE last chapter came to a close early on a May morning. It is now August, and the time for the departure of the autumn reliefs for India draws near. Conversation and demeanour at the mess of Colonel Belmont's regiment are not quite so unrestrained now as they used to be, particularly amongst the younger portion. Colonel Belmont himself is a "regular dining member," and occupies the commanding officer's quarters in barracks. The hired house in the adjacent country, its gardens, its croquet parties, above all, its bright little boudoir, so pleasantly and so painfully associated with its little mistress, are all things of the past.

Clive is on the Continent spending her honeymoon, and the colonel has reverted to dreary bachelor life with his regiment. He is very lonely, but through the medium of the post, Clive does as much to comfort him as she can. Hardly a day passes that the letter-sergeant is not the bearer of an epistle, telling "darling old Daddles" how happy she is, and how kind and everything that's perfect Stud is, and that the only drop of alloy in her happiness is the thought of his loneliness.

These letters the colonel does not read as he does his others, in the orderly-room, on the parade-ground, in the ante-room, wherever they may be handed to him; but he

bears them off to his scantily-furnished quarters, and there in solitude takes them in delicious little doses of a paragraph at a time. Woe to the wretched orderly with a message, or the miserable sub soliciting leave from the morrow's parade, who breaks in upon these moments! He comes away, according to the old saying, with a flea in his ear. But so closely in a regiment are a commanding officer's movements watched and wishes consulted, that it soon becomes known that after mid-day post, the one the foreign letters arrive by, it is better to leave him alone for awhile, and alone he is left by everyone, from majors to orderlies.

To see the colonel in the orderly-room "telling off" prisoners, or on parade "going down the throat" of some wretched delinquent who has blundered, and then to see him in the solitude of his own room eagerly perusing one of these letters—his face gentle with soft, tender love, his eyes dim, his hands trembling with pleasure—it would be hard to believe him one and the same man. Then, when he has read to the uttermost line, he puts the precious document away under lock and key in an old travel-stained, service-worn despatch-box with some faded yellow letters, which are even more tender and loving than the one the colonel now lays alongside them with such reverent hands.

Very often Clive sends her love or some kind little message to Dolly Jones, which of course the colonel righteously delivers. He formerly shared, in a modified degree, his austere sister's antipathy to poor Dolly on account of his jewellery and dress; but it becomes manifest to the colonel that in one so much liked by Clive and Dorrien, of all the world the two people whose opinions he values most, there must be a great deal of sterling worth somewhere, and he cultivates Dolly, and gradually finds it out for himself, more about the region of the heart than the head. Then, too, Dolly was "best man" at the wedding, and acquitted himself very fairly on the trying occasion—for it was a trying occasion to him, very; and to have

taken so leading a part in an event so fraught with happiness to his child is enough to secure him a warm place in the colonel's thoughts.

Sometimes there is a letter from Dorrien as well, which, though far short of Clive's in point of interest, affords the colonel intense gratification. Dorrien's style of letter-writing is not of the "namby-pamby" "correct-letter-writer" order: "*Le style, c'est l'homme.*" Each sentence is short, sharp, and decisive; each word carries with it the conviction that it is meant; and as all this perspicuity is devoted in these letters to the discussion of plans for Clive's welfare and happiness, the doting old colonel's confidence in his child's future grows stronger than ever, and robs his present loneliness of half its sting.

After this fashion did Colonel Belmont buoy himself up in his solitude. He was also at this period a great deal up in town, and as the time approached for the return of the "happy couple," the veriest glutton after town dissipation in the regiment was not a more frequent passenger between Aldershot and Waterloo. This gave rise to a report that the chief was on the look-out for a wife, but nothing was farther from the colonel's thoughts. The attraction up in town was a little labour of love he was engaged in. He had bought a small house in the best part of South Kensington, which had been advertised as "a bijou residence;" and the beautifying, altering, improving, and fitting up the same as a gift to Clive and her husband was his especial delight. A bow window was thrown out here, a conservatory built there, a spiral staircase somewhere else. The garden was laid out afresh, and made bright with flowers. There were flowers, too, in all the windows from the kitchen to the garret, and along the balcony and over the portico, until the house was balmy with their fragrance; for Clive loved flowers, and the colonel had often seen her in ecstasies over some simple little daisy. So there were flowers in every possible place, just in the same way as if

Clive had loved ourang-outangs, there would have been a monkey-house in every room.

Of all these preparations, especial attention was paid to the apartment consecrated to Clive's especial use, and everything was done to make it as far as possible the exact counterpart of the bright little boudoir where the colonel had so often been coaxed and wheedled into forgetfulness of life's petty worries. The arrangement of it he remembered as distinctly as if it had been photographed on his brain, and every familiar article from an ottoman to a china pug reappeared in exactly its old relative position.

He had one day taken Dolly Jones to inspect the general arrangements of the house, on the strength of his friendship with the future occupants, and not with the least idea of receiving any practical hints in the matter, but to his astonishment Dolly, on being shown over the premises, burst forth into unsuspected brilliance, and on all points appertaining to Clive's pleasure or comfort, whether architectural, horticultural, generally useful, or ornamental, was brimful of the happiest suggestions. So much so as to elicit the remark from the colonel:

"Why, Jones, my dear fellow, one would think you had been in the habit of studying my daughter's taste as deeply as I have."

As the colonel spoke, he smote Dolly on the back, a piece of familiarity with any one which he had not been guilty of since the days when he had been a captain. The thoughtful and kind consideration for his child filled his heart to overflowing until all barriers of age and rank were swept away. From that day Dolly was a constant companion of the colonel in these visits, and his fertility in suggestions for Clive's benefit continued with unabated luxuriance, and awakened the colonel's astonishment and admiration in about equal degrees. To such an extent did the latter sentiment take possession of him, that his idea of Dolly's mental capacity underwent a complete change, and

he even began to associate jewellery with genius. There was, however, one form Dolly's friendship took which had to be nipped in the bud. In conjunction with numerous tradesmen, he laid deep plots resulting in the surreptitious appearance at odd times of all descriptions of costly and tasteful articles, and on this the colonel put his decisive veto. It was lucky he did, for Dolly, if allowed to indulge himself to the top of his bent, would have been ruined in a fortnight.

Dorrien was not forgotten in the general arrangements, and it was in the fitting up of a study and library that the colonel more particularly addressed himself to his son-in-law's wants. Here the food for the mind provided by the colonel was of the driest nature, and, to continue the metaphor, of that kind which might be described as the stale Abernethy biscuit of mental provender—hard to swallow, but very nourishing when digested. Numerous treatises on Political Economy by Malthus, Adam Smith, Babbage, Rae, Mill, Fawcett, and a host of other writers on the "dismal science," as it has been called; M. Passy on Systems of Cultivation and their Influences on Social Economy, Malthus on Population, Thornton on Over-Population, Tooke's History of Prices, Hansard, Blue Books, Red Books, Yellow Books, Reports of Royal and Select Commissions on all conceivable subjects, and such like, were drawn up along the shelves in an array that would have been imposing had it not sunk into insignificance before the mass of military literature of the same solid nature which crowded the book-cases. Military Law, Precedent, Procedure, Organisation, Administration, Regulations; Military Statistics, Returns, Forms, Rules, Acts of Parliament (described by the framers as "for the better government of Her Majesty's Forces," and described by Her Majesty's Forces as the reverse), Military Systems, Circulars, and Warrants, Military Biographies—in short, enough military lore to have set up all the officials in the War Office and Horse Guards was concentrated in the

study. The colonel had ransacked his brain and half the booksellers' shops in London to provide this mental feast, and in his strange selection was the key of an aërial castle he had lately built regarding his son-in-law.

Such genius, such force of will, such heaven-born gift of command were not to lie waste, and where but in the Representative Assembly of the Nation was to be found proper scope for the exercise of these qualities? The colonel had fixed his heart on it—Dorrien was to be a Member of Parliament, and the dream of the old soldier's ambition was to see him Secretary of State for War. Hence the preponderance of the military element in the coming politician's library. Here was the wonderful store of military information from which the future member and ultimate War Minister was to draw his material for illustration, argument, precedent, or refutation, as circumstances might demand.

In this day-dream of the colonel's, there entered other feelings besides mere selfish gratification at the advancement of one in whom he had so strong a personal interest. Like many military men, he had a spaniel-like love for the profession in which the "ha'-pence" bear such an absurdly small proportion to the "kicks," and in his son-in-law he beheld a future doughty champion of its rights and interests.

That the army was totally unrepresented in Parliament, and that this should be remedied, was a hobby the colonel was much given to riding at the Senior, in his mess, or wherever there was a military congregation assembled. There was no one in Parliament whose business it was to stand up in its defence.

Parliamentarily, the army was nobody's child. The War Minister who stood *in loco parentis* was only a step-father, with nearer and dearer children of his own to look after—"Party," the first-born; "Low Estimates," the second; and "Self-Advancement," the youngest and, perhaps, the best

loved of all. The House, contended the colonel, consisted of those who were rabid against the army—a disease strangely peculiar to England, who owes so much to her soldiers—those who were utterly indifferent to it, and a few who sympathised with it. The efforts of this last little band of well-wishers were decidedly feeble. Mostly military men themselves, they were, like Othello, "rude in speech and little blessed in the set phrase" of debate. They were ready to take up the cudgels in defence of the army, and cudgels their weapons were, while their adversaries were armed with rapiers. They often—generally, in fact—fought with right on their side, but they had little political training, and it was harder for them to prove that two and two made four, than it was for their skilled opponents to show that they amounted to five. Amongst the latter were men who on every other subject could be sound, just, and brilliant, but who had only to touch on a military one to entangle it in the meshes of the most perverted sophistry, and to attack it with unaccountable acrimony. To them the mere mention of the British officer or soldier was as a red rag to a bull. The simplest measure for his amelioration, pecuniarily, socially, or professionally, was opposed and denounced as if it had been a proposal for the establishment of a military despotism throughout the country. In the ranks of this section were actually to be found a few military men, who, like all apostates, became the most bigoted in their antagonism. Against these renegades the colonel was more bitter than against any other opponents, and on their heads he would pour out the vials of his wrath by the hour.

Of course there were a few members, the colonel allowed, who in addition to a special knowledge of military matters, gained by actual experience, could bring some debating power to bear on the subject; but these generally threw themselves into the cause in a half-hearted way. They had an idea that their first duty was to their constituents, and these sent them to Parliament to protect *their* rights and

forward *their* interests, and regarded their actions with jealous eyes. The colonel knew of more than one Member of Parliament who had been soundly taken to task by his constituents for occupying himself with military matters—as if a military question were not a national one.

"It is laid down that a man by becoming a soldier does not forfeit his rights as a citizen," reasoned the colonel; "then why should he, unlike any citizen, have no one whose first duty it would be to guard his interests?" "By Jove!" the colonel would say with justifiable warmth, "the only part soldiers take in the elections of Members to Parliament is to stand like dummies to be cut and bruised with sticks and stones."

The first remedial step, in the colonel's opinion, was that the army should send to Parliament a certain number of members of its own election. "Then, sir," the colonel would say, "we should not hear of prize-money kept back for fifteen or twenty years, until it was nearly all squandered away in squabbling, while of those who had earned it at the risk of their lives, the one half were sick to death with hope deferred, and the other half were lying in their graves."

That Studholme Dorrien, single-handed, was going to make a clean reformation of all this directly he got into Parliament, the colonel, even in his overdrawn estimation of his son-in-law's capabilities, did not expect. But that he would be the thin end of the lever which would eventually roll away the dull weight of prejudice, indifference, and ignorance, under which every measure for the benefit of his dearly-beloved profession always languished—the colonel fondly hoped. Yes, Studholme Dorrien was to be Her Majesty's Secretary of State for War. He was cut out for it.

Thus, over all the colonel's preparations, confidence in the future shed bright rays of light. He knew what his own child was, or thought he knew, for perhaps love made him a little blind; and in Dorrien's future he believed as implicitly

as Lord Todmorden himself could have believed, had Miss Torkingham occupied Clive's place. Mightily different were the ideas of the two old men on what should be a wife's influence over the career of a man working his way in the world. Naturally they were so, for their models of feminine perfection were as different as fire from water. Of his views Lord Todmorden has been his own exponent some chapters back, and the reader may recollect the line he laid down as the proper one for a wife to follow. Exactly the reverse was the colonel's picture of what a wife should be to her husband. The sweetener of his home after some bitter check in the outer world, the relaxation after the strain, the repose after the strife—all these she should be. But to descend into the arena with him, to be always at his elbow urging—for if he required such urging he was not of the right stuff—to carry the struggle out of season into the domestic precincts, to keep up the strain—these she should not do. She might buckle on his armour at home, and send him forth with her prayers; but she must not accompany him to the field. That she should take a tender and intelligent interest in his career beyond that home circle of which she should be the centre was indispensable. But nothing more in this direction was required, for anything more would turn her from a solace into a bore, from a soother into an irritant.

Such, with his child's disposition and characteristics tenderly before his mind's eye, were the colonel's ideas on matrimonial obligations; and with a fervent belief in Dorrien's and Clive's capabilities to fulfil these requirements—*his* qualities for fighting the battles of life, *her* brightness, affection, and soft, winning ways—he looked not only hopefully, but confidently to the future.

The house was completed—as far as completion could be attained where the loving heart could never rest satisfied, the loving hand never tire of giving finishing touches which

never finished—and the title-deeds were made out in Dorrien's name. It is all the same, thought the colonel.

> The light of love shines over all,
> Of love that says not mine and thine,
> But ours, for ours is thine and mine.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### HOME.

THE sudden outbreak of the Franco-German war made the Continent too hot for honeymoons, and sent Clive and her husband back to England a week or two sooner than they had intended.

The colonel was, of course, at the station to receive them with open arms. The meeting was a joyous one, but, as far as the colonel was concerned, there was a slight gloom overshadowing it. It was the old story, no rose without a thorn. For weeks he had been looking forward to this particular day as one of unalloyed bliss, but with its advent came an adverse circumstance. His exchange to a regiment at home had fallen through. A new regulation had just been issued on the subject, imposing such conditions as to virtually prohibit exchanges altogether, and "sell or sail" was all that was left to him. The former alternative, for reasons hereafter explained, was out of the question.

"Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof," thought, or tried to think, the colonel; and he strove hard, as he once more gazed on his daughter's face, once more clasped her in his arms, to shut out the foreboding with which this suddenly necessitated departure for India filled his mind. At all events, he did not tell Clive anything about it; and there was nothing to dash *her* joy.

He was waiting at the station as the Dover train drew up, and even amidst all the selfish bustle and confusion of arrival, there were few on the platform who did not pause in their search for luggage or friends to gaze with kindly smile on that one-armed, soldier-like looking old fellow being half-smothered in the embraces of the bright young English girl, with the fair and almost child-like face.

Clive did not care two straws for lookers-on. She had been thinking of the meeting nearly all the way up from Dover, and had determined that she would let "Daddles see that, though a fond and loving wife, she was still the same warm, loving daughter." As his face appeared at the door of the carriage, she thought she detected a look of hesitation, as if he were not quite sure whether the greeting was to be in the old style or conducted with the greater dignity befitting the married state, and in her anxiety to dispel all doubts on this point, she fairly threw herself at his head.

The colonel thoroughly understood and appreciated the tender, delicate motive, and though his hat was knocked off under the wheels of a passing hand-truck, and there was a hat-feather in one eye, a riotous lock of golden hair in the other, and a pin running in somewhere else, the moment was a happy one. To such a length, too, did Clive prolong the embrace that the colonel, in a state of semi-blindness, produced by the hat-feather and the lock of hair, coupled with a natural anxiety to welcome his son-in-law, warmly shook hands with a porter who stood by with the recovered hat and a suggestive palm, and pressed "tuppence" into Studholme Dorrien's hand.

When at last he had got her at arm's length, and had recovered his vision, with what loving pride he gazed at her! Never had he seen her looking so well. Fresh from many a ramble along the Mediterranean shores, the warm kiss of the southern sun still lingered on her cheeks, and in her eyes the deep blue of the lovely inland sea seemed still

to be reflected. But, best of all, the light of love and joy shone over her. Altogether a bright, sparkling picture of youth and happiness was this beaming little face, surmounted by somewhat dishevelled hair, and a hat very much on one side, the effects of that warm embrace. "Pray God, it be not too bright to last, as people say of a very sunny morning," thought the colonel with a sudden heart-sinking. Deep love possesses, in direct ratio to its intensity, an unhappy faculty of hanging out the "danger flag" on every possible occasion. But in this instance it was speedily furled again. You might as well have expected an icicle to remain in the full blaze of a tropical sun as a misgiving for Clive's future to last in her presence this afternoon.

The greetings being at last over, and the luggage collected, a move was now made homewards. All about the "bijou residence" in South Kensington was to be a surprise, and both Dorrien and Clive were under the impression they were on their way to apartments taken for them by the colonel *pro tem.*

"Getting out of the region of lodgings, aren't we, colonel?" said Dorrien as the cab drove down Piccadilly.

"Well, I thought, my dear fellow, you would both like something a little way out of the bustle and noise, and so I got you a place down here," replied the colonel, sailing as close to a lie as he had ever gone in his life.

"What a thoughtful old Daddles it is," said Clive. "Of course we should. I knew he would arrange everything beautifully."

"These aren't apartments, Daddles?" said Clive some ten minutes after, as they drew up opposite the "bijou residence," with its windows bright and fragrant with summer flowers.

"Aren't they?" said the colonel, getting out of the cab and farther prevarication as quickly as possible. "That's all you know about it. Come along."

Hardly had they reached the snow-white steps, when the door was opened, and gathered in the hall were the servants ready to receive their young mistress. Almost too engrossed with her own thoughts to notice the bows and curtsies, Clive, with a light gradually dawning on her, followed the colonel until he opened a door and turned his face to her with a look full of meaning. One glance, showing her that what she saw was the exact counterpart of her own bright, cosy little room of the old days, told her all. It was too much. She burst into tears, and laying her head against his arm, sobbed out, "Oh, darling Daddles, how kind, how kind of you."

"For you, darling; for you and Studholme," said the colonel, with a slight tremor in his voice. "This is a little present for you both."

"A little present, my dear sir. Do you call a house a little present?" said Dorrien.

"Yes, Dorrien, very little, compared with what I am capable of doing out of my love for you both. I don't wish to do the heavy father," continued the colonel, with a consciousness that the occasion was gradually forcing him into that *rôle*, "but give me your hand, Stud. May it be a happy home to you both, and may the blessing of God Almighty be upon it!"

Here he kissed his little daughter struggling on tip-toe, and shook hands with the son-in-law, one of those shakes which between two honest men can mean so much.

"There now, come along and see the drawing-room," said the colonel; and with Clive's little hand still nestling in his, he led the way.

Here another pleasant surprise awaited them, for on the door being opened there advanced to meet them Dolly Jones dressed for dinner; just as if everything had already shaken down comfortably in the new home, and their old friend had dropped in in response to a friendly invitation to dine.

"This is *the* Jones, the *only* Jones," said the colonel, jocularly. "I don't know what I should have done without Jones. If you notice any arrangement, Clive, particularly conducing to your comfort or pleasure, you may be certain Jones is at the bottom of it. Bravo, Jones!"

And again, for the second time in his life, Dolly received a hearty smack on the shoulder from the colonel's hand. For the last half-hour the subject of this panegyric had been composing a pretty little speech of welcome; but first the colonel's unwonted jocularity disarranged his ideas, and then Clive's bright face, tears still in her eyes, and laughter playing about her mouth, drove them clean out of his head altogether. But between such old friends there is a deeper eloquence than the eloquence of words, and though all Clive said, as she shook one hand, was, "Dear old Dolly!" and all Dorrien said, as he shook the other, was, "Well, old boy!" they were the sweetest sounds that had fallen on his ears for some time.

It was now long past seven, and after a few more hearty words with Dolly, Dorrien, Clive, and the colonel hurried away to dress for dinner.

The meal was a cheery one. The colonel had not done the thing by halves, and both *cuisine* and cellar had received every attention. But, of course, such considerations were a long way secondary. Notwithstanding the voluminous correspondence that had been kept up, there was a great deal to be talked over.

Had Daddles seen anything of Aunt Smack lately? No, he hadn't; for the fact was, "Daddles" had been full of the house, and, until it was off his thoughts, he had not been in a fit frame of mind to enjoy his sister's society.

Had he come across Lord Todmorden? Yes, he had seen him driving and walking several times, but never with his wife, and he looked very down in the mouth; in short, appeared conscious of having made an old fool of himself.

Then there was a great deal to ask about the regiment,

and about the colonel's exchange, concerning which last the colonel prevaricated, and said it had not been arranged *yet*, in a tone of voice which left Clive to believe that it soon would be. He was not going to throw this wet blanket over the first evening in her new home, not he.

Amidst the many topics broached, you may be sure Clive managed to find both time and opportunity for a few private words with Dolly concerning that unfortunate love affair of his, and his confused replies and blushes subjected him to a kind but severe reproof for continuing, as she could see with half an eye he did, to hanker after the worthless creature who had thrown him over so disgracefully.

After the dinner Clive was not allowed to depart. They had no secrets from her, and as her tongue, at a nineteen-to-the-dozen rate, had been the largest contributor to the conversation, it could ill be spared. So she remained with them while they sat over their claret and devilled biscuits, and until they had had coffee. Then, it being ten o'clock, and bearing in mind that Clive must be travel-tired, Dolly considerately arose to take his departure, and Dorrien announced his intention of accompanying him as far as the club, to see if there were any letters, and to hear the news.

"You see," he said to Dolly, as they rattled off to Pall Mall in a hansom, "I daresay she'll like a half-hour or so alone with the old governor."

* * * * *

"You must go to bed, my child. You must be tired," said the colonel, as soon as father and daughter were alone.

"Excuse my undutiful disobedience, Daddles, but I'm not going to do anything of the sort. I'm going to sit up with you, and you must do everything I wish."

The colonel submitted himself to her will, and in a few moments they were in her own little room, sitting at the open French window with only the stars for their light, he in his old chair, she, as of yore, on a stool at his feet. His hand, harder and rougher perhaps for the double duty

entailed on it by that empty sleeve, rested lovingly on her shoulder. But this was not enough for Clive. She was as fond as a kitten of being petted, that is, by those she loved; and taking the knotted hand in both hers, she rubbed it against her soft cheek and called it a "darling sweet pet of an old nutmeg-grater." Then, as if to settle which way the doubtful compliment was to be taken, she smothered it with kisses.

"Now, Daddles, you must have a cigar. This is just the time for one, and I should like it so. No cigars ever smell like yours and Stud's, and you always talk so much better between the puffs."

The colonel did not require much pressing; in two moments he was blowing a peaceful cloud, and Clive, with uptilted little nose, was sniffing in the aroma of Havanna with the air of a connoisseur.

"I haven't sat on your knee for hours together while you smoked in the evenings without knowing a good cigar, have I, Daddles? That's an accomplishment I don't think Stud has reckoned, although he's always ransacking his brains to find out new ones. Here, let's have a puff. You know it never draws properly until I've started it."

It was a sight which never palled on the colonel to watch Clive blow an elaborate wreath of smoke from her buttoned-up little mouth, and then hand back the cigar to him with a calm, satisfied air of having now started the proceeding on an easy footing.

By degrees she settled down to a more serious vein, and on they sat in the calm summer night, her head resting against his knee, his hand still held to her cheek between both hers.

Never, thought the father, had there been such a daughter. Never, thought the daughter, had there been such a father. She poured out her heart to him. She told him how she loved, admired, and looked up to Studholme Dorrien more and more each day, and how happy she was.

"But now, Daddles, I've been talking all about myself; I want to hear a little more about you. When will that exchange be settled? Is there any hitch? You don't seem to be very communicative about it."

"It's very hard to get an exchange now, Clive."

"But you *will* get one eventually, won't you?" she asked, turning her head up with a startled look.

"I don't know, darling," and he strove hard to turn the subject.

But she would not be turned away from it. Her senses had sounded the alarm.

"Daddles, something tells me you're not going to exchange. Oh! don't, don't go out to India, darling Daddles. Don't go to that land of bloodshed and murder, where the climate and the people vie with each other in treachery." (Poor child, she had reason to speak of it thus.) Don't haggle over a few hundreds. It's that, I'm sure it is. How good and noble, and how like you, to spend thousands over this house to please me, and to hesitate over a few hundreds for yourself! But you are not the only one concerned. It's for me, for my sake, I want you to stop. Give anything they want for the exchange. I'd sooner live in a hovel than that you should go out to that dreadful country, which I can't think of without a shudder. You will exchange at any cost to please me, won't you, Daddles?"

He tried to quiet her, and turn her off from her suit.

"Daddles, don't keep anything from me. Tell me exactly what your plans are."

She was no longer sitting at his feet. In her vehemence she had clambered on to his knees, and, with a hand on each of his shoulders, was gazing eagerly into his face.

"Come, come, Clive; there's no occasion for all this."

"Don't keep me in suspense. Tell me, are you going to India?"

"I can't help it, my child. A new regulation has come

out about exchanges, which is just the same as prohibiting them altogether."

"But sell out, Daddles; sell out. That's better than anything, and we can all live together so happily."

"I cannot."

"Why not?"

"You know of the war going on on the Continent?"

"Yes, we passed through Germany and France on our way home. Oh! Daddles, in the midst of all the cheering and bands playing in the different towns, I saw such white, set faces among those who weren't going to fight—the mothers and fathers and wives. I never shall forget them. The cheering and the music seem like an indistinct dream; but those faces—I can see them now as plainly as I saw them then. You don't think all this misery is in store for England? We shan't join?"

"I don't see, Clive, how England can keep out of it. It's my opinion the departure of the regiment for India will be countermanded; or, if we embark, we shall probably be stopped at Gibraltar or Malta; or, even if we do get as far as India, it won't be long before our services will be required on the North-West frontier. All Europe will soon be in a blaze, and while the fate of nations is being decided, it is not likely that England's sword will remain sheathed and her guns silent."

"But, Daddles, oh! darling, surely you have fought and bled enough for your country; sell out. Oh! do sell out while there is time."

"There is not time, Clive. I could not sell out in the present crisis with honour. The new regulations won't allow me to exchange; my sense of honour forbids my selling out; be my own brave little daughter then, and tell me what to do."

"Stay with the regiment then, darling; go to India, go to France to fight; go wherever you may be ordered. I'll never ask you to do anything you would regret. Oh! I

ought to have known I was too happy, and that it couldn't last," she sobbed, in a sudden outburst of grief, as she threw her arms round him, and laid her wet cheek against his.

"Come, Clive; don't make my duty harder for me than it already is, darling."

She stopped her crying at once and kissed him. Not another sob, not even a sigh escaped her now, and she remained quite quietly with her head resting on his shoulder, and the tears coursing silently down her cheeks, until, tired out with travel, excitement, and grief, she fell asleep in his arm. And there she lay, as she had often done when a little child, worn out with play or some childish grief, until Dorrien returned. It was not the first time by many that Daddles' arm had been a haven of rest.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### BUSINESS IS BUSINESS.

THE regiment made its preparations for India in a desultory, half-spirited manner. There was a general feeling, amounting almost to certainty, that it would be countermanded and kept for more serious work nearer home; and though it still continued to be under orders for India, there was a firm belief throughout all ranks that it would never get there, and that Belgium or France would be its destination instead. The camp was full of "shaves"—*i.e.*, rumours. The chief controller had been ordered to prepare equipment for ten thousand men, should it be found necessary to throw that force into Belgium at a day's notice. Another report was that the Aldershot force as it stood was to form one of the fighting divisions under "Dodgy Dan L——," a popular and able general officer, who had obtained his *sobriquet* from the numerous and ingenious artifices at his command for circumventing his enemies. Then the Duke of Cambridge had been heard to say on the last field-day, as he had looked at a body of skirmishers advancing through a wood, that in less than a fortnight, he believed, they would have something more than powder in their rifles. With such talk and rumours the air was thick. We lost our heads a little in our anxiety to be prepared for the struggle, and to learn a few lessons from what was going on while there was yet time. The French had been surprised in a

position, owing to their defective outpost arrangements; then forthwith outpost and vedette duty was rammed down every one's throat. The Germans had "tapped" the telegraph wires and gained valuable information from the enemy; straightway were our officers immediately sent to learn telegraphy, the rudiments of which they were just acquiring, when the Germans or French did something else sharp or stupid, and they were hurried off to another field of military knowledge. Every Prussian officer could take a rough sketch of the country he passed through, and could survey. Every British officer must do the same; and then the lanes and roads about Aldershot often furnished sad spectacles of stout old veterans, who had never in their lives drawn anything but a cork or the long bow, feebly "sketching the surrounding country," or struggling with a prismatic compass on the top of a tripod which "*would* whobble so confoundedly." We were in a desperate hurry to be scientific.

It was not only the military pulse that was quickened by the prospect of war; there was a general feeling of painful excitement throughout the country; and without saying that the ordinary run of Englishmen have less feeling than military tailors or money-lenders, it is probable that by no classes were the horrors of war regarded with such dismay as by these two. To them war would have been ruinous, and the greatest activity prevailed amongst them to lessen its horrors as much as possible by getting their outstanding accounts settled as far as they were able. It is said that the most copious tears shed over the list of killed at the Alma were those which flowed from the eyes of a certain West-end tailor as he read the name of customer after customer. Once, just once, during the sad perusal is he reported to have smiled through his tears, and that was when he came to the name of one gallant fellow who had paid up in full the very day he embarked. To save themselves from the agony of mind endured by this estimable tradesman, both

tailors and money-lenders now exerted themselves to the utmost, and, owing to these efforts, Dolly Jones received the following communication from Messrs. Barington, Couttson, and Co., the eminent bill discounters :

"London, July 23, 1870.

"SIR,

"We hold a bill, accepted by Captain Garstang, late of your regiment, for the sum of fifteen hundred pounds, and endorsed by you ; and we beg to inform you that the same on presentation has not been honoured. As Captain Garstang has retired from the service, and we have been unable to ascertain his whereabouts, we are compelled to apply to you. At any other time we should have been ready to meet your convenience by taking a fresh bill, should you have desired it, but, under existing circumstances—your regiment being under orders for India, and the present unsettled state of Europe—we must press for an immediate settlement.

"We have the honour to be, Sir,

"Your obedient Servants,

"BARINGTON, COUTTSON, & CO.

"Captain Jones,

"—— Regiment, Aldershot."

Dolly—who, by the way, had obtained Dorrien's step, and was now a captain—had quite forgotten all about the bill, and, without saying anything to his brother-officers, out of a generous consideration for Garstang, he strove to find that worthy's address. The attempt was unsuccessful, and merely wasted a few precious days. The matter, however, did not occasion Dolly much disquiet, and he made up his mind to pay and look pleasant. He had not the sum at his command, but carelessness and generosity had more than once before driven him beyond his handsome allowance to a greater extent even than this, and the consequent neces-

sary application to his father had always, after a few formal words of advice, been successful. He had no compunction in drawing on his father; he was robbing no one of his or her due by doing so. Old Jones was, as the saying is, rolling in riches, and Dolly's three brothers—the family consisted of four sons, of which Dolly was the youngest—were all in business, each building up a colossal fortune for himself.

While on this subject, it would be as well to say a few words on Dolly's birth and parentage.

Mr. Jones had begun life in very humble circumstances, but by determination, thrift, and acuteness, had successively become a railway contractor on a small, on a big, and on a gigantic scale; then had taken to finance, and was now at one of the topmost branches of that tree which is so fruitful to those who understand its cultivation.

When, as a railway contractor, he had made the small sum of a million, and was busily turning it over like a snowball, he looked about him for a wife, and, according to the fashion of many of his class, cast his eyes in the direction of the titled aristocracy, and finally fixed them on the Lady Hermione Atholstone. Lady Hermione was "the daughter of a hundred earls," each of whom had been getting poorer than his predecessor, until the impoverished nobleman, her father, had fallen so low that Jones, on the top of his million, reached high enough to get at his lordship's ear on the subject of a matrimonial alliance with his daughter. The brothers talked at first a great deal about "kicking the snob out of the house," and the different branches of the Atholstone family wondered the "hundred earls" didn't rise from their graves to join in this vindication of the family dignity. But the man who makes a million of money out of nothing before he is forty years of age possesses qualities which enable him to laugh at such opposition, and the Lady Hermione Atholstone became Lady Hermione Jones. Four sons were born to this marriage; the three

eldest were regular Joneses; Dolly, the youngest, was a regular Atholstone. Lady Hermione was a soft, delicate, pretty woman, without much vigour of intellect or character, but with a tender, loving heart. Her three eldest sons, as they grew to men's estate, became gradually estranged from her, until she could hardly believe they were the children she had borne; they grew up into regular business men with mutton-chop whiskers, City tailors, and had calculating manners; and when they came home to dinner, after having been in the City all day, they brought the City with them, and talked a business jargon she could not understand a word of. Hating business as she did, and sick to death of it as she was, it was natural she should fix her heart on her youngest son, who was affectionate, unselfish, romantic, chivalrous, confiding to simplicity, generous to a fault—in short, without a single business-like quality in his whole composition. On the other hand, old Jones put Dolly down as a failure from the time he was six years old, when he detected him in the habit of giving away his toys to his playmates, while his elder brothers—chips of the old block—had at the same age sold or bartered theirs on advantageous terms. And when Lady Hermione and Dolly himself chose the army as a profession, old Jones said it was the proper place for him. To have put Dolly into business would have been an insult to it in old Jones' eyes. When he mentioned "business," he almost bowed his head, and the army he looked upon as a sort of genteel Earlswood Asylum for family failures like Dolly.

So Dolly became a soldier, and—alas! for him—just at this time, embittering his start in life, the loving, gentle Lady Hermione died. Since her death, old Jones had been kind enough to Dolly in the way of giving him a handsome allowance, and, when occasion required, supplementing it by an additional grant without much ado; but their paths in life diverged considerably, and there was little in common between father and son.

A day or two after the receipt of the money-lender's letter, Dolly repaired to old Jones's office in the City. The old gentleman was still at it from sheer love of business, and meant to go down to the grave in harness.

"Well, Augustus." (By the way, Dolly's name was Augustus.) "Well, Augustus," said the old gentleman kindly enough, for he could not dislike Dolly, though he might not think much of him; "glad to see you. Sit down. Now, what can I do for you?"

"Well," said Dolly, as he shook hands and took a seat; "I've come on a matter of business——"

"Don't make use of the word lightly, Augustus. I do not, I cannot think you are justified in applying the term BUSINESS to any affair or transaction of your own," said old Jones, half shuddering at hearing the sacred word fall from such frivolous lips, and applied to so contemptible a subject as the confused finances of a military man. "You've got through your allowance; that's what it is, eh? State your case, Augustus, and make it as short as you can."

"I certainly have spent more money lately than——"

"I never expected you to make any, Augustus, so no explanation."

"I was going to say, I have had heavy calls on me lately, in consequence of our going to India——"

"India—going to India?"

"Yes. I have told you several times, we're going to India next month, and have also mentioned it in my letters."

"Yes, yes, of course, I recollect now; it had quite escaped me. Going to India, eh? You must get a week's leave, Gus, and let us see a little of you before you go. Never mind any preamble about 'heavy calls.' What's the sum, my boy; what's the sum?"

"Well, I want fifteen hundred pounds at once."

"Fifteen hundred pounds! You're a regular Atholstone, Augustus, a regular Atholstone—no knowledge of the value

of money. Fifteen hundred pounds! Bless me! No further call upon me, Augustus? This will clear you of England?"

"Yes, I have quite enough to meet all other demands."

"Well, well, Gus; you're going to an unhealthy and distant country—we won't quarrel over fifteen hundred pounds; but in future your allowance must do. I'll have the sum placed to your credit at the Regimental Agent's this day. By the way, you haven't been gambling, playing cards, betting recklessly on horses, have you?"

"No, I've neither been playing cards nor betting to a greater extent than I could afford to pay, if I lost, without any inconvenience. It is not for that that I want the money."

"Dress and jewellery; jewellery and dress. A regular Atholstone!"

By the way, old Jones was in a great measure, if not wholly, accountable, though he would have been vastly surprised and insulted had you told him so, for Dolly's tastes in these two directions. Directly he had made up his mind that his youngest son was a "regular Atholstone," his whole treatment of him tended to impress upon him that he was therefore bound to spend his money foolishly, and in old Jones' eyes, the most foolish use to be made of money, except giving or lending it, was to spend it on personal adornment.

"No, neither is it for dress or jewellery," replied Dolly good-naturedly, ignoring the taunt conveyed in the expression, "a regular Atholstone." In the Jones family, "You're a regular Atholstone" was a term of contempt about on a par with "you're an egregious ass."

"Then what is it for? You're not going to lend the money, Augustus?" gasped old Jones, instinctively buttoning up his trousers pockets. "Augustus, a fearful suspicion flashes through my brain that *you're going to lend the money!*"

"Well, not exactly lend it, though I daresay it may be repaid to me."

"'Not exactly lend it, though he dares say it may be repaid to him,'" repeated old Jones in faltering tones. "Now, what may be the meaning of that? Who *does* repay money when it isn't lent? It's hard enough to get 'em to repay it when it is. Augustus, be intelligible if you can't be intelligent."

"I backed a bill for a brother-officer," said Dolly, "or rather a man who *was* a brother-officer, and——"

Old Jones threw himself back in his chair and stopped Dolly with a motion of his hand; then addressed himself apparently to the ceiling in a tone of voice which was intended for a burlesque on Dolly's. "'He backed a bill for a brother-officer, or rather a man who *was* a brother-officer, and—and—and the brother-officer, or rather the man who *was* a brother-officer, has—oh! Lor'—has let him in. And a very brotherly-officerlike thing to do. That's my opinion of 'em. Now, sir," continued old Jones with a sudden change from burlesque to ferocity, "do you think I've nothing better to do with my money than to put it into the pocket of a Jew money-lender, for the sake of any scamp in regimentals who may choose to get over a simpleton like you? If you do, you're mistaken. Not a penny of this fifteen hundred pounds do you get from me. You've got into the hobble—now you may get out of it. Go away—my time is precious. Never let me see your face again until by your own exertions you've extricated yourself from this mess. I knew you were a shallow-pated blockhead, but I didn't think you a dishonest one. Did it not occur to you when you signed that bill that it was my money you were making free with; or when you came here asking for the fifteen hundred pounds, because you had overdrawn your allowance, that you were extorting money from me under false pretences?"

"No," said Dolly; and if he was a regular Atholstone

now, it was in the promptitude with which he cast back the aspersion on his honour. "It never did, and never would occur to me in that light. When I signed the bill I trusted to the honour of a brother-officer, as I shall trust again, though I may have been deceived by one."

"Dolt!" interrupted old Jones.

"And when I asked you for the money I did so openly, and would have told you everything, but you wouldn't have any explanation. You have brought an accusation against me," continued Dolly, with a quivering lip, but a brave, unfaltering heart, "which I could not have imagined coming from any man, least of all from my father. And I cannot help saying that had you taken the precaution to warn me specially against an act which you seem to regard with such abhorrence, and exacted a promise from me on the subject, I should never have given you occasion for the words you have just spoken."

"Nonsense," said old Jones impatiently. "On your entrance into the army I gave you the best piece of general advice to suit your case that I could think of, and that was not to be a greater simpleton than you could possibly help. But I did not think it necessary to enumerate every act of ridiculous folly that could occur to my brain. I did not particularly enjoin you not to stand on your head in the middle of Regent Circus, or specially warn you against trying to fly down from the top of the Monument, or inform you that it would be better for your health if you didn't eat two pounds of strychnine at a sitting, because I didn't think you *quite* fool enough to have done any one of these; and for the same reason I did not think it requisite to warn you against backing a bill with a money-lender. Go away, I repeat, let me see nothing more of you until you can prove to me, by some sort of self-denial and management, that you have learnt to know what is due to yourself and others in regard of money. Go away. No begging from your brothers, mind."

"I have never begged from any one," said Dolly gently; "and am less likely to now than ever."

"I don't exactly see that. The less a man has got, the more likely he is to beg, it strikes me; and when you go out of this room you may look upon yourself as considerably poorer than when you came in," replied old Jones, who in his calculations on money matters was never accustomed to include feelings.

"I mean," said Dolly, "that if my own father turns his back on me in difficulties, I shan't expect others to do what he won't."

"Nonsense. Go away."

Dolly was very pale. He was cut to the quick. Though his father had never been an affectionate parent to him, he evidently felt his words acutely. But he did not resent them. In his ideas of filial duty he was a Chinaman; he prepared to leave, and in silence offered his hand.

"There, good-bye," said old Jones, giving his hand without a look. "Good-bye, recollect my words, I mean them."

Dolly shook the cold, rigid hand extended to him, and went away.

After the door closed, old Jones tried to resume his thoughts at the point where Dolly's appearance had interrupted them; but for about the first time in his life he could not concentrate his mind on business. At every effort, Lady Hermione's gentle face seemed to rise before him with an interceding look in her eyes, and the soft tones of her voice seemed to whisper in pleading accents, "Call him back, call him back. He never did a dishonourable action in his life. An undutiful word to you never escaped his lips, an undutiful thought never entered his heart. Call him back."

"No, no," said old Jones, dismissing the vision, "let him go. I'll bide by my word. A regular Atholstone. He'll never know the value of money until he's felt the want of it. It's for his own good. Let him go. A regular Atholstone!"

## CHAPTER XV.*

### TEMPTATION.

As a child the usual predatory instinct had been nearly, if not quite, dead in Dolly. I do not think he had ever pulled flies' legs off, or stuck pins through cockchafers and butterflies; and that is not what can be said of most little boys, not even of those who have afterwards grown up into eminent divines or kindly philanthropists. His nature revolted against fighting with anyone, but most of all with his own father; and feeling very sick at heart, he plodded his way along the crowded City pavement towards the offices of Messrs. Barington, Couttson, and Co. It was trying work walking in a pair of tight varnished boots on the hard burning pavement in the dog-days, but Dolly would not take a cab, and stoutly resisted the importunities of the hansom drivers, who seemed to think the sight of such a swell walking in the very heart of the City was an insult to their order. He determined to begin his course of self-denial at once. It is never too late to mend; it is also never too early. He knew very little of the City, and commenced his journey after the fashion of a carrier-pigeon, by describing a few circles round his starting-point before emerging into Fleet Street and getting straight away on his business.

His errand was fruitless. Mr. Joel Arrarat (who in

* This chapter is dedicated, without permission, to the opponents of the Regimental Exchanges Bill.

point of fact was Messrs. Barington, Couttson, and Co. all in one, those names having been composed by himself as possessing a good solvent ring about them) would not hear of a renewal, which, at all events, would have given Dolly breathing time. He would not be particular to a day or two, or even a week, but farther than that he could not go. At any other time he would have been only too happy to accommodate Captain Jones, but existing circumstances, Captain Garstang's disappearance, Captain Jones' departure for India, or, perhaps, to the seat of war on the Continent, made it imperative for him to have his money. Captain Jones knew what he had put his name to; he surely did not mean to repudiate his signature?

Most assuredly Dolly did not mean to do anything of the sort. It was foolish of him to sign the paper, but what he had signed he would stick to.

"If you were going to stay in the country, that would be a different thing. I should then be quite agreeable to renewal as often as you chose, until it was quite convenient to you to take up the bill," said Mr. Joel Arrarat, who, before giving Garstang the money, had made himself thoroughly acquainted with Dolly's parentage and financial status. "Excuse me, Captain Jones; it's no business of mine, but I should have thought you would hardly have gone to India with your regiment. Why not exchange to one staying at home? If you do, this little business can run on until it's quite convenient to you to take it up, as I said before."

"It's impossible to get an exchange now," said Dolly.

"Well, you think over it. If you can manage to stay in the country I'll renew that, but only on that condition."

Declining the money-lender's proffered hospitality, Dolly departed with a heavy heart. His commission must go; there was no help for it.

He returned to Aldershot that afternoon a wiser but infinitely sadder man than he had set out from it in the

forenoon. The only other occupant of the carriage was an officer of Dolly's acquaintance, who belonged to the regiment occupying the adjoining lines in the camp. He looked as crestfallen and dejected as Dolly himself.

"When does your regiment start for India?" he asked.

"In about three weeks."

"I wish I were going," said the officer.

"I wish I wasn't," said Dolly, who, pained as he would be to leave his old regiment, still thought it infinitely better to do that than leave the army altogether. "In fact, I shan't go out. I mean to sell, anxious as I am not to leave the service."

"You can't exchange, of course, now?"

"No; with the new regulation it is next to impossible now to get an exchange. No man is going to exile himself for nothing."

"No, of course not," said the officer, and after that remark he preserved a moody silence.

During the remainder of the journey Dolly often caught his eyes fixed on him, and when they arrived at their destination there was a strange hesitation about the man, as if he were wishing to say something and kept thinking better of it.

* * * * *

Dolly did not go to mess that night. He was too low-spirited to face the careless talk and laughter of the mess-table. He was not disturbed by any of his brother-officers, for they all thought him still in town, and he sat in moody silence through the twilight into the darkness. After a time a knock at his door disturbed his meditations, and the officer who had travelled down from Waterloo with him entered.

In an instant Dolly was doing the honours of his small establishment with his usual friendliness and hospitality.

"Sit down. Here you are, this is a comfortable chair.

I'll let it back a little farther. There, that's it; now have a liquor?" said Dolly, as he lighted the candles.

"No, thanks, Jones. I thought I'd just step over from our lines and see you."

"Well, have a cigar, then?" said Dolly, proffering his cigar-case.

"Thank you. I don't mind having a smoke. I want a quiet talk with you, Jones. I've been turning over in my mind what you said this afternoon coming down. You, whose regiment is going out to India, want to stay at home, and I, whose regiment is staying at home, want to go to India. We are both captains, and each would do his duty as well in his new as in his old corps. Does it not appear absolute folly for us not to suit ourselves? It seemed as if Fate threw us together to-day for the especial purpose of mutual accommodation."

"But how about this new regulation?" said Dolly. "Would you exchange for only just the bare expense you would incur by the exchange; just the mess and band subscriptions, and cost of changing uniform? That's all they allow to be given now, you know."

"No, I could not," was the reply. "I am in debt, and I could not leave England without paying up."

"Then," said Dolly, "the thing's an impossibility, and there's not much use talking over it, is there?"

"Look here, Jones," said the officer, rising from his seat, his face flushing with excitement, and perhaps with the shame of a hitherto honourable and high-minded man who feels that circumstances are irresistibly tempting him from the path of honour which he has always trodden from his youth up. "Look here, Jones, it's a hard case. My means are small. Every penny of my small fortune that I could scrape together has gone in purchasing my steps. They have done away with purchase, but they have not given me back my money; nor will they ever do so. I love my profession. It is the pride and glory of my life. We

are a family of soldiers; for generations we have never been anything else. or, possibly, I should have been a richer man." (He was speaking with a volubility which seemed to be carrying every feeling, every consideration before it with a rush.) "I have been no holiday soldier; I loved my profession too much to treat it carelessly. I have studied with zeal and perseverance every branch of knowledge connected with it. At the school of engineering at Chatham, at the school of musketry at Hythe, in military telegraphy, in military signalling, at the gymnasium even, I have worked hard and taken out extra first-class certificates in each. Not long ago I passed out one of the first from the Staff College. It was all a labour of love with me. And is all this to be thrown away? I came home with the regiment on purpose to do all this, otherwise I should not have left India, for I knew what a hopeless thing it was for a poor man to get on at home; but I thought I would try and struggle through in order that I might attend these different schools of instruction. But the struggle has been in vain. Where God's gift, my intellect, was concerned, I carried everything before me; but where my country was concerned, in not giving me enough to live upon, I have utterly failed. I might as well have tried to swim across the Channel with a 32lb. shot tied to my heels. Inch by inch the sea of debt has risen about me, and now it is over my head. Throw me over the life-buoy, Jones! By God! the cry of 'Man overboard!' rings through the ship, and he's sinking fast."

As he spoke, he smote the table with his fist a mighty blow. He was terribly excited; worry and a mind conscious of meditated dishonour were driving him wild.

"If I can't clear myself of England," he went on before Dolly had time to reply, "I must sell out. If I once got to India clear, with my staff-college and other certificates, I should get a staff appointment at once. God knows, I worked hard enough for it, and I should be fair on the road

to success. And, Jones, there is another's happiness at stake." (His voice trembled and his lips quivered.) "In India I could marry the girl I've been engaged to for years, but if I don't go to India I shall break with her for ever. So help me God, I never shall be the dastardly, selfish wretch to drag her down to poverty and misery. Jones, I tell you my only chance is to exchange on the conditions allowed by the old regulations, which were framed for men of flesh and blood. If I do this, everything looks bright before me. If I don't, then I feel I shall go to rack and ruin as fast as I can, driven to it by despair and blighted hopes. You want to stay at home; I want to go to India. Give me three hundred for the exchange, as we should have been allowed to do before this new regulation came out."

"How can I?" said Dolly. "How can either of us sign that declaration that, on our honour, neither directly nor *indirectly*, have we given or taken anything more than the amount allowed by regulation?"

"Ah! I, too, once thought that was not to be got over, but I don't think so now. Look here, Jones, if a man holds a loaded pistol to your head, and says, 'I'll blow your brains out if you don't sign this paper,' and suppose, to save your life, you *do* sign, then neither in law nor in honour, I say, is that signature binding. It is just the same in this case. There is a close analogy between the two. They point a regulation at you, loaded with injustice and gross ignorance—what the lawyers, I believe, would call *crassa ignorantia*—and they say, 'accept the conditions here laid down, or we'll blow your prospect, your happiness to the winds; we'll blast your career for ever.' That's what the regulation says to me, and I'll sign whatever they want, to save myself everything I value in this world; but I won't consider the signature binding. I won't; and by Heaven above, my conscience shall absolve my soul of dishonour."

Dolly's soft heart ached for the speaker.

"I am placed under peculiar circumstances," he said.

"As I cannot get an exchange to a regiment staying at home, I shall have to sell out to pay a debt of honour, I may call it, which will swallow up all my commission money and what I may have at my banker's; but if I could have stayed in England, I need not have paid this money for some time, and I could have lent you the three hundred, which you could have repaid me whenever convenient——"

"Stop, Jones. I should not have taken it. I believe they have not *yet* brought out a regulation forbidding an officer to lend another money, but I have a little private regulation of my own forbidding me to beg from any one. I come to you not to ask you to lend, but with an offer, a fair offer for our mutual benefit. Come, let us suit ourselves, as between man and man we are entitled to do, and let us sign the declaration. The dishonour will lie with neither of us, but with those who drive us to this course. As I said before, I'm sinking fast. The sea of debt closes over my head. I'm going down. Cut away the life-buoy, Jones, cut it away, and throw it to me, or I'm lost!"

The man was so terribly in earnest that Dolly's keen sense of honour tottered under the attack of his fierce eloquence. He wavered.

"Dolly, if right and wrong lay clearly before you, you would be like iron, I know you would."

Clive's words rose before him. They seemed to be whispered into his ear; they glowed before his eyes in burning characters; they stirred his heart; they filled the air with the soft sound of her voice. He wavered no longer.

"Never!" he cried, "never shall I sign my name to a lie; I will cut my right hand off sooner than do this!"

For a long time the other remained silent, and when he spoke, his words were not those of temptation. Gradually the flush and fierce whirl of excitement gave way to leaden-eyed despair.

"Jones," he said, as he rose to leave, and offered his

hand, "you'll excuse what I am going to say. When I used to notice you dressed in the extreme of every fashion as it came out, and blazing with jewellery, I little thought that you, of all men in this world, would be the one to teach me a lesson. Thank you, Jones. Good-bye."

Dolly wrung his hand, and kindly bade him hope for the best.

The visit, after it was over, seemed to Dolly like a dream. He wrote for some time; then he blew his candle out, and sat on and on in gloomy meditation through the darkness and into the dawn. Every trumpet or bugle sound in the camp; the non-commissioned officers calling the "roll" at tattoo; later on, the sentries challenging, the reliefs "tramping," the shrill fifes playing the reveille—each familiar sound of military life was a painful reminder that he had done with it all for ever. Those dreams of glory so often indulged in as a child, a youth, and a man, must be dismissed for ever from his mind. The blow was a crushing one; but nerving him to meet it manfully was the recollection of that little speech which he had treasured up in his mind ever since it had been uttered, which had just saved him from dishonour, and which now occurred to him over and over again: "Dolly, if right and wrong lay clearly defined before you, you'd be like iron, I know you would."

* * * * *

Broad daylight is streaming into the hut, and Dolly still sits in his chair. On the table by his side lies a large official letter directed to the adjutant, which will be sent to the orderly-room at an early hour.

His servant enters.

"Not been to bed, sir?" he asks in astonishment.

"No, I did not feel sleepy."

"An officer of the —th shot himself on the next lines this morning, sir, just afore revallay. I've been talkin' to

some o' the men of his regiment, and they say as how he was the best soldier they'd got, for all he was only the junior cap'en."

Dolly starts to his feet with horror. There is no occasion for him to ask the officer's name.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### "THAT WRETCHED GIRL!"

EARLY the following morning Colonel Belmont, according to custom, sat in the orderly-room with his adjutant going through the mass of correspondence which had accumulated since the preceding day. Some of the official letters were addressed directly to the commanding officer, others intermediately to the adjutant.

"By Jove!" exclaimed the last-mentioned officer *sotto voce*, as he glanced through one of the latter with a look of blank astonishment on his face. "Jones, sir, sends in his application for permission to sell," he added aloud, as he submitted the document to his superior officer.

"Jones! Jones going to sell! Why the last man in the regiment I should have thought of—*the* very last."

At this the orderly-room sergeant and the two clerks, writing at their respective tables, desisted from their work and pricked up their ears. Dolly is a favourite with all ranks, and in the uneventful groove of making up "returns" along which their lives run, the intelligence is as startling a piece of news to the three military machines as they have heard for a long time.

The colonel took the letter and glanced down it. There was no doubt about the matter. It was strictly according

to regulation, and at the bottom was Dolly's signature. Colonel Belmont looked really troubled, and, as he put the letter on one side, muttered, "Very provoking, just as one began to like the fellow and to find out what sterling good there was in him. If he had gone a few months ago, when I had thought him only a good-natured coxcomb, I should not have regretted him so much. But now it is different. I have conceived an affection for Jones. Here, send my orderly with my compliments to Captain Jones, and say I wish to speak to him at once!"

Dolly soon made his appearance in obedience to the mandate, and the colonel cleared the orderly-room.

"Sit down, Jones. What's the meaning of this? You look pale!" said the colonel, laying his hand kindly on Dolly's shoulder. "You look as if you had gone through a sharp mental struggle, and I have no doubt you did before you decided on this step. Had it been any other officer, I could have ascribed some cause—pecuniary embarrassment, scrape about some petticoat, dislike to India, family considerations, weariness of the service. But none of these apply to you, and I confess I am fairly puzzled as well as grieved. Perhaps it is some question on which an old fellow like me could offer his advice without being thought intrusive. Let us drop the commanding officer altogether. Look on me as an old friend, both willing and anxious to serve you. Come, Jones, I may be able to help you; an old head is longer than a young one."

"I'm afraid you can't help me, colonel; it's very kind of you to take this interest in me, and I shall never forget it. If I had been able to follow my own inclinations I should never have left the old regiment, but I can't help it now; I hope you won't press me farther for my reasons—I simply can't help it."

"I'm sorry for it, from the bottom of my heart, Jones, I am sorry to hear you say this. Every man knows his own business best, and I will not pry into yours any farther after

what you have said. It may be a satisfaction, however, to you to know that I feel thoroughly convinced your reason is one which reflects no discredit on yourself."

"Thank you, colonel; it's a great comfort to me to hear you say that."

"At any rate, I shall not forward your papers for a week; as suddenly as you have made up your mind to go, something may happen to make you change it again."

"No, colonel, I fear not. You will do me a great favour by forwarding them as soon as you can; the sooner it's all settled the better."

"Well, Jones, I shan't send them on to-day; we'll wait, at all events, for another day, and see what to-morrow brings. Sleep over it another night, and let us have a little more private conversation together before we take the final step. I am going up to town after parade. Dorrien and Clive will indeed be surprised to hear this."

Dolly thanked the colonel for his kindness, and withdrew to find himself assailed by all his brother-officers, who had been enlightened by the adjutant. They laid violent hands on him in the ante-room of the mess, and told him that it was all nonsense; that he was an old fool; that he was not going to be allowed to leave, and that was all about it, and so he had better go to the colonel at once and get his papers back again. But when they saw how thoroughly in earnest he was, they tried different tactics and attacked him singly.

During the morning he was taken aside in turn by nearly every officer in the regiment, and the same arguments were gone over again and again. He would be miserable out of the service; he was fit for nothing else; he was liked by every one in the regiment, and had always been as happy as a sand-boy in it, why go then? But all these arguments, though incontrovertible, were in vain.

Later on in the afternoon he received a telegram from Dorrien.

"The colonel has told us. Come up at once; C—— wants to see you particularly. Dinner and bed."

Of course Dolly went. He would have gone farther than from Aldershot to London in response to such a summons; "C—— wants to see you particularly," would have drawn him from the ends of the earth.

When he arrived at the house in South Kensington, he was received by Dorrien, who at once opened fire upon him. "Dolly, you old fool! what's this sudden fit of insanity? I hope, however, it's only temporary. It was all very well for me to leave the service, I didn't care for it; but you do, and you'll never be as happy anywhere else as in the old regiment."

"I know I shan't, Dorrien, old fellow," replied Dolly; "but, all the same, I am going to leave."

"I shan't bother you for your reason, Dolly; the colonel tells me you are reticent on that point, and, old friend as I am, I'm not going to intrude myself on your confidence; but whatever it is, Clive knows it. *She's* found it out, old man, and she has got a rod in pickle for you, which you are to go and have laid on all by yourself. There, go in and take your punishment like a man," said Dorrien with a laugh, as he opened the door of Clive's *sanctum*, and pushed Dolly in.

Dolly advanced to shake hands, but Clive drew herself up most majestically, and put her hands behind her back.

"No, certainly not, Dolly—I mean Captain Jones. Certainly not; I'm ashamed of you, I am. I'm ashamed of you. I *would* have a little more spirit if I were you, indeed I would!"

"Why, what's the matter?" asked Dolly, with bewilderment, admiration, and amusement all blended in his countenance; for it was all three—bewildering, pretty, and amusing—to see Clive bridling up and tossing her head over some mare's-nest of her own finding. "What have I done?"

"What have you done! What are you *doing?* I've no patience with you. After all my lectures too! Do you think I don't know the reason why you're leaving the army? Oh! Dolly," concluded Clive, looking him straight in the face and shaking a tiny finger vigorously within an inch of his nose, "you are still, notwithstanding all the good advice I've given you, hankering after that wretched girl who treated you so disgracefully, and you find as the time draws near for the regiment to leave England that you can't tear yourself away from the country where she is—that you can't put all these thousands of miles of sea and land between her and yourself. Oh! Dolly, Dolly, constancy is all very well, but constancy wasted on inconstancy is weakness."

If Dolly could ever have tired of anything Clive could do or say, he would have been wearied of the frequency with which this hallucination of her brain was always cropping up; but to him she could never be tiresome, no matter what she did or said. He could not help smiling.

"It's no laughing matter," said Clive as sharp as a needle. "Dolly, Dolly, I did not expect you could have been so madly infatuated; what good can come of it?"

A sudden thought occurred to Dolly that it would be just as well to let her continue under the delusion for the present. Better to let her think that he was the victim of some vain, designing flirt—particularly as the character was mythical and no harm was done to any one's reputation—than to let her know the real facts of the case. And, for many reasons, he did not wish to blacken Garstang's character, past blackening though it might be already; he would not for the world have let her know that his father for one foolish act had virtually cast him off—had behaved with harsh cruelty; and, lastly, he would fain spare himself all the importunate offers of assistance which a knowledge of his pecuniary strait would, he knew, at once call forth, and which in honour he could not accept.

"I am very sorry," he said, "that you are so angry with

me, for you are the last person in the world I would cause a moment's displeasure or annoyance." Here Dolly spoke from the bottom of his heart. "But I can't help myself in the course I'm taking; come what may, I must leave the army."

"Dolly, I almost despise you."

He winced at this; he could not bear her to think him quite the maudlin, sickly, sentimental fool she took him for, and he could not help defending himself just a little.

"My reasons are infinitely more weighty than you imagine—they are indeed. Do you recollect once saying to me that if right and wrong lay clearly defined before me I'd be like iron?"

"Yes, but I meant iron in choosing the right, not the wrong."

"You've no idea what a help that little speech has been to me in my difficulty, and how it has nerved me to make up my mind to this step."

"Then I'm very sorry I ever said it. In the first place, as it turns out, it isn't true; in the second, it has made me an innocent instrument of evil. I beg most emphatically to retract that speech *in toto*; and now, as you're deprived of its comfort and help, I hope you will be weak enough to do what is right."

"I'm no match for you in words, Clive; any man, woman, or child that I ever met could always shut me up in five minutes, and, as far as the mere argument goes, I must throw myself on your mercy. I might make a better fight of it, for right is on my side, but my tongue is tied; all I can do is to assure you on my honour that I've no choice in the matter. Please don't press me any more. It's hard enough already; don't make it harder for me, Clive."

She was disarmed in a moment; her eyes filled with tears, and she gave him her hand.

"There, Dolly, then, I give it up. I've gone as far as friendship, even old friendship like ours, ought to go, and

I'll go no farther. I am sorry, very sorry, you can't change your mind; I am sorry for your sake and for my own. I don't think you'll be happy out of the regiment, for you'll never be amongst such friends again; and it was such a comfort to me to think that you would be with papa out in that horrid India, and would be able to write me long letters about him. I'm sure I shan't be able to depend upon what he will say about himself; for I'm convinced if he had his other arm carried off by a round shot, was down with jungle fever and cholera, stung by a cobra, and half eaten up by a tiger, all at once—he'd manage somehow to write me a few lines, saying he was never in better health in all his life—poor, darling old Daddles!"

Here Clive began to cry very bitterly—an inevitable accompaniment to any allusion to her father's approaching departure for India; and Dolly never felt a sharper pang of regret at having to leave the regiment than now, as he watched a grief which it would have been in his power to lessen had he been going to stay. It was a very pitiable little face in its sorrow; when she cried, Clive had a way of buttoning up her mouth and "boohooing," utterly regardless of unbecoming contortions of countenance.

"Don't cry, what's the good?" said Dolly, with a lump in his throat, and half an inclination to make a duet of it. "I should have written you such long letters about him."

"Oh, you foolish old Dolly!" said Clive, laughing through her tears, "you provoking old Job's comforter, you! why, that only makes it worse. Dear me! it's very annoying to have such a sense of the ridiculous that one can't even have a good cry in comfort. Now, let's call Stud in and tell him I've been unsuccessful. That's another nasty little pill you've rolled up for me, Dolly; I shall have now to confess my failure after boasting all the morning of what I was going to do. That wretched girl!"

## CHAPTER XVII.

### "THE GIRL HE LEFT BEHIND HIM."

THE days and weeks glided on, and, contrary to general expectation, the departure of the regiment for India was not countermanded. This was at any rate some relief to Clive, for a countermand, she knew, would have meant more deadly work than Indian service. Though India was in her imagination a country fraught with all kinds of evil, she was nevertheless thankful for the mercy which spared the regiment the still greater perils of war. The fast approaching hour of separation was longed for, while it was dreaded. If it were only past, she thought, each fleeting moment would be bringing him nearer to her again, while now each moment was drifting them nearer to the bitter parting.

The regiment was to embark on board one of the Indian transports, and Dorrien and Clive went down to Portsmouth to see the last of it. On the same errand were numerous relatives of the officers, and old comrades, gathered from all parts of the country, until the hotels were full to overflowing with them. Amongst the old companions-in-arms of those going out was Dolly Jones. Alas, poor Dolly! his commission had gone into the voracious maw of Mr. Joel Arrarat, *alias* Barington, Couttson, and Co., and Dolly was

eating his heart in silent grief over it. Conjecture had been very busy concerning the mystery in which his retirement was enveloped, but as no satisfactory solution was arrived at, the proverbial woman got the benefit of it all, though it was admitted on all sides that a more unlikely fellow than Dolly Jones—in the first place to go in for anything of the sort, in the second, to keep it so dark—there did not exist; and he obtained the honour of exemplifying another proverb about the depth of still waters. It is needless to add, that amongst the ex-officers of the regiment who had assembled to wish their old comrades "God-speed," Captain Garstang was not one. Nor was his absence in the least deplored.

The regiment embarked in the afternoon, and the transport was to sail at an early hour the following morning. Clive could have very little of her father during the last day in England. She and Dorrien went on board the transport certainly; but Colonel Belmont was the central figure around which adjutants-general, quartermasters-general, brigade-majors, adjutants, orderly-room clerks, and orderlies buzzed like a lot of bees, and there was no getting hold of him by himself for two moments together. From the number of times he had to sign his name, it seemed as if his principal duty before leaving England was to provide as many of his countrymen as possible with his autograph. Sometimes he signed a document on his own knee, sometimes on the capstan-head, sometimes on the square back of an erect orderly; wherever he was, whatever he was doing, there was always something to sign. Towards evening, however, the rage for his autograph seemed to decline, and he was able to get away for a quiet dinner, and two or three hours' undisturbed companionship with Clive and her husband at their hotel.

The dinner was naturally not a very lively one. As she cut up his food for the last time, the scalding tears ran down her cheeks, and when she was made to eat, every mouthful nearly choked her. She could not look at him without her

eyes brimming over, and various, as well as transparent, were the devices under which she sought to conceal her grief from him. She had forgotten her handkerchief in the next room. She wanted to see what that noise was in the street, unfortunately sometimes when it happened to be as silent as the grave. She had left a letter in the bedroom which she did not want the servants to read. It was too hot with the window open ; it was too cold with the window shut. Each of these pretexts was seized as an opportunity for a few surreptitious tears, and she would then come back to the table, as if she were in capital spirits, and going to India the funniest thing possible.

In the room across the passage a dinner-party of a rather more jovial nature was going on. Such of the officers as had already taken leave of those nearest and dearest to them, and had been able to get leave from the ship for the evening, were being entertained by the ex-members of the regiment at a farewell dinner. The champagne and conversation flowed freely, and peal after peal of laughter echoed through the hotel, as the old well-known mess-room jokes were revived one after the other. They were a jolly enough party, I daresay, as a rule, but in many an instance the loud laugh was merely a cloak to hide the bitterness in a heart still wrung by the recent parting from sweetheart or wife, parent or child. The occasional burst of merriment jarred on Clive's senses, and she thought it very unfeeling of them all to be enjoying themselves so.

When the coffee made its appearance, Clive insisted on her father having a cigar, and, according to custom, lighted it for him. She did not accomplish the act like the old hand that she was. The smoke got into her eyes and brought the tears streaming from them, until it was a wonder the cigar was not put out. At least, she said it was the smoke. "For the last time," was the harrowing reflection which occurred to her mind at every simple loving

office she performed for him. She could not think "for the last time until he comes back again." The morrow was too black, she could not look beyond it, she could not pierce its gloom.

Dorrien soon joined the party in the other room—his quondam brother-officers would have taken it very ill if he had not—and Clive and her father were left alone. There was no footstool in the room, but a commercial traveller's hat-box, spied in a corner, was made to do duty for one, and she spent the remainder of their last evening together in her old position at his feet, with his hand in both hers.

Shortly before eleven o'clock there was a general move to the transport, for the order of the evening was identical with that issued by the gallant Captain Crosstree to his "tight trim sailors":

> All must be aboard to-night,
> The time and tide we can't afford to lose.

The society of "Daddles" was far too precious now to waste even what might be got of it in a fly and a walk through the dockyard, and Clive, with her husband, accompanied him to the jetty, where the huge white monster lay, held fast by cable and hawser.

A kiss, a promise from Clive to be on board the first thing in the morning, and then the colonel disappeared through the great white side of the floating barrack, towering high above the quay.

"What a blessing and a comfort, darling Stud, it is to have a husband like you when one's in trouble," said Clive, as she hung on to his arm while they walked back through the dockyard together. She could hardly be said to lean on his arm, she could not do much more than touch it. "There is something so reassuring about you. Always so cool; never any fuss or fidget, and so considerate, too. I'm sure most men would be quite angry with their wives, and

almost jealous, too, at their fretting about anyone so, even when that anyone was a father. But I can't help it."

"I don't want you to help it, poor little woman. I'm not likely to find fault with you for being affectionate and warm-hearted, so don't bottle up your tears on my account." And as he spoke he patted the small hand which nestled on his arm.

"Thank you, Stud. You see we are different; we were more to each other than fathers and daughters usually are. He had lost everything in this world he loved but me, and he made so much of me in consequence. And then, having only one arm, the poor darling, made him with all his manliness as helpless as a little child in some ways. Oh, dear!" continued Clive, in a burst of remorse, "I know I often cut up his meat for him in too big lumps, and he often took a piece of fat for a bit of potato; but he never blamed me for being careless, though he hated fat. And I often wore a lot of finery when I knew that in his simple pure taste he liked me better in a little print dress than in anything else; he often told me so. Oh! what a worry and expense I must have been to him in clothes. I was *so* perverse and awkward. I was *such* an aggravating little reptile. I know, as a child, whenever I had on a white frock I generally ran up against a sweep, and when I had a dark one on I was sure to tumble over a miller. What a provoking little wretch I was! And I can't recollect a single hasty word or a single angry look he ever gave me. I almost wish I could."

"Come, Clive, there's nothing in these childish trifles to reproach yourself with," said Dorrien, with a half-smile on his face.

"Yes, of course, I know they are trifles, but still they are trifles which would have brought a box on the ear, or at all events a good scolding on any other child. But there are other things which are not trifles, I have to reproach myself with. I'm sure I wasn't as dutiful to Aunt Smack,

I meant Aunt Macnamara, as I ought to have been, for she was *his* sister. But I'll do everything I can now to be friends with her, and to like her for his sake. Stud, let's have her to live with us?"

"Oh! blazes," ejaculated Dorrien, thoroughly startled out of that coolness on which Clive had so recently been expatiating. "Certainly, if you like it, Clive. But don't you think an old tabby tied to a lively young terrier would be quite as pleasant an inmate? Or, perhaps, if we were each to swallow a pint of vinegar every morning before breakfast it would answer the same——"

"Oh! don't, Stud. Don't say a word against her. She's his flesh and blood, whatever she is."

By this time they had reached the dockyard gate, and a fly soon took them the remainder of their distance home.

* * * * *

The following morning the hotel was early astir, many of the inmates being in some way connected with the departure of the transport; but the first to step on board from the shore was Clive Dorrien, then others followed, and the poop of the ship was soon covered with little family groups conversing in earnest tones.

The last half-hour or so before a parting on board ship, when each unfamiliar sound that falls on the strained senses may be the signal for separation, is painfully wearing to the mind, and many who had been starting and turning a shade paler at every bugle sound, at every bell, and at every word of command, and asking if it was time to leave, now hailed almost as a relief the unmistakable tones of the order to clear the ship.

A general move towards the gangway now takes place, and Clive, her trembling little hands clasped in her father's, is borne along with the current. Most of the women are weeping, and many of the men look pale. There are some bright faces though in the throng. Travel and change of

scene are glowing prospects to youth, and many a last jest rings out merrily, many a cheery word is spoken.

"By-bye, old fellow. I'll turn up for the Derby next year; don't forget to keep that seat for me on your drag."

"Good-bye, Dorrien. If you want a change, bring Mrs. Dorrien out. Nothing nowadays. Always a welcome and a bungalow for you both."

"Good-bye, Mrs. Dorrien. We'll take care of the chief for you, never fear, and send him back to you again hale and hearty."

"Good-bye, Dolly. Good luck to you, old fellow. Wish you were coming out with us."

Here Dolly is nearly torn in pieces by friendly hands, and I won't stake my existence that there is not something very like a tear trembling in his eye.

"Look sharp, please. Clear the gangway there," sings out the first lieutenant from the bridge.

"Unfeeling brute!" thinks many a woman, as the sharp tones jar on her overwrought nerves, and in the midst of her grief she finds time to dart a withering glance at that bronzed, hard-looking face. But she is unjust. The heart that beats under that waistcoat of "navy blue" is the reverse of stony. But duty is duty, and comes before sorrow as well as before pleasure.

"Good-bye, my darling child," says the old colonel, as he strains the small, fragile form to his breast and gazes down on the white, quivering little face. "If we never meet again——"

"Oh! darling, don't say that, don't, don't!" she sobs out.

"But if we never do, my child, let it be a consolation to you through life to feel that you have never said a word, never done an action to give your old father a moment's pain. A better or a more loving child never gladdened a parent's heart. May God reward you for it all, my own little one, and may He——"

The old colonel cannot trust himself to say any more; he stoops down and kisses her long and fondly, while she clings to him and sobs out some incoherent words.

"Good-bye, Studholme;" and as he turns to shake hands with his son-in-law the colonel's voice is broken and faltering. "Take care of her. I thank God for the confidence I feel in you; the comfort it is to me at this moment, my dear fellow, I cannot be too thankful for."

"Good-bye, colonel," replies Dorrien, as he seizes the hand with a hearty grip. "All that can be done in this world to protect her from harm and sorrow I'll do. Nothing shall ever come between us."

"Clear the gangway there, quartermaster! Ask those ladies and gentlemen to be good enough to move on."

"Ay, ay, sir. Beg pardon, miss; first-lootenant's orders. Lor' bless 'ee, miss, don't take on so, don't," says the quartermaster as he hands Clive over the side with a paw which is as rough as a bear's and at the same time as gentle as a woman's hand. "Darned if ever I takes another ratin' aboard one o' these 'ere lobster-pots! Blowed if it ain't all 'uggin' an' kissin' an' cryin' their 'earts out! Makes a chap feel all-overish like," soliloquises the shaggy old sea-dog as he catches himself a smart back-hander across the eyes, by way of keeping himself up to the mark. "I never see such a face though as that 'ere. Blow me, if it wasn't like a angel 'avin' its leg took off by the surgeon in the cockpit! It was all of a quiver, like I've see'd scores o' times."

Clive hardly knows how she gets from the ship. She feels there is a strong arm round her, and that is all. In a moment or two she finds herself on the jetty, supported by Dorrien, and gazing up through her blinding tears at a figure above her.

"Let go for'ard!" rings out the word of command.

"Ay, ay, sir," roars a voice like the bellowing of a bull of Bashan under an attack of bronchitis; and a great splash,

as a hawser falls into the sea, tells how promptly the order has been obeyed.

The screw churns up the water astern, and slowly the bow cants off seaward.

"Let go abaft!"

Another hoarse "Ay, ay, sir;" another splash; and the monster is loosed. More churning up of the green water astern, and the great white fabric slowly drifts away from the landing-stage.

Inch by inch the distance between the colonel and his little daughter widens, but still they keep their eyes fixed yearningly on each other. A few more turns ahead, and the faces crowding over the ship's sides grow confused to those on shore. There is no band, no cheering. It is ticklish work conning that huge monster through the crowded harbour, and nothing must interfere with the words of command. An incipient cheer from a group of ex-officers of the regiment is at once nipped in the bud by a dockyard official, whose hair nearly stands on end with horror:

"No cheering in Her Majesty's dockyard, if you please, gentlemen."

The admonition is of course attended to, and the women's sobs are not, as they usually are on these occasions, lost in the cheers of the men.

Some of these poor "girls they leave behind them" are in scant and shabby clothes, and some have trudged it the whole way from Aldershot for this last farewell. Many of them have children in their arms, and some still wear the tawdry remains of their poverty-stricken attempts at bridal attire; their miserable history is condensed in the phrase, "Married without leave."

The transport is in the middle of the harbour now, and the faces on board are fast fading away, when a good-natured-looking naval lieutenant, who evidently knows all about it, exclaims, "She won't clear the harbour for the next five or six minutes, and if any of you like to nip into a

fly, you'll hit her off at Southsea Pier; she'll pass it within a cable's length."

There are numerous vehicles about, and those able to afford the luxury of "nipping into a fly" do so at once. In a trice, Clive finds herself in one with Dorrien and Dolly. But just as they are starting off, she notices the wistful glances from the tattered married-without-leave group of women.

"Money, Stud; give them money to drive," she exclaims.

In a moment, Dorrien and Dolly are scattering all their loose silver amongst the group, and a little drop of comfort falls on Clive's aching heart, as she sees a passing gleam of pleasure light up the wan, pinched faces of her lowly sisters in sorrow.

Through the streets of Portsmouth they rattle in a procession of flys, without attracting much notice. Portsmouth is as accustomed to embarkations as it is to eating and sleeping; and Southsea Pier is reached just as the great ship sweeps past within, as the naval lieutenant had told them, a cable's length.

Those on board are on the look-out, for they have been told by the sailors and the naval officers what that sudden hurrying off in flys from the jetty meant, and the ship from stem to stern is crowded with eager faces. On the poop are the officers, and conspicuous amongst them by reason of his height, his white hair, his empty uniform sleeve, and glittering medals, stands the old colonel. To Clive the morning sun seems to shine only on him, and she sees nothing but that one figure.

"There goes the band call!" exclaims Dolly, whose practised ear has caught a bugle sound.

Comparatively there is sea-room now, and there is no objection on board to a little noise. A few more moments of intent gazing on the precious-freighted ship, and then the strains of "Auld Lang Syne" come faintly over the

water from her. The morning mists still hang above the sea, and gradually a veil seems to come between the ship and those on shore. Slowly, first the cherished features, then the form, fades away from Clive's piercing gaze, and as the great white monster disappears in the haze, it seems to her like something ghostly carrying her "own darling old Daddles" off to some unknown spirit-land.

"Stud, I shall never see him again. I know, I feel I shan't."

A wild paroxysm of grief bursts from her, and Dorrien leads her away.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### IMPLACABILITY.

So deeply to heart did Clive at first take her father's departure that she became quite thin and pale, and in spite of all Dorrien's efforts to rally her, it was seldom he could win back to her lips one of her own bright smiles, or raise one of her own merry, ringing laughs. But after a few weeks the wound began to heal rapidly, and she gradually reappeared in her true original character. It was not because absence was thus early undermining the deep love she had for her father, and making her thoughts of the poor old wanderer one iota less tender, that she gradually recovered her gay spirits.

In the first place, her naturally bright, happy disposition was not a congenial retreat for sorrow; and in the second place, there was everything in the influences of her home and of her husband to drive dull care away from her. Of course there were times, in the stillness of the night, in the solitude of a dull afternoon, when the yearning to see "darling old Daddles" again was as acute as ever; but these were shadows over the brightness of her life which were daily diminishing. As constant dropping will wear away a stone, so constant thinking over a grief will in time smooth off its sharp points and edges, and Clive was, before

very long, able to think of her father, not with a shudder as she looked back on the bitter parting, but with a thrill of hopeful joy as she looked forward to the happy meeting.

Thus, before long, contentment and happiness reigned in the home which the colonel had so lavishly and lovingly prepared for his daughter. It was just the sort of place very young couples, on the look-out for an abode of bliss, picture to themselves, and fancy they have got half-a-dozen times over before they have learned, by bitter experience, that in house-agency language a conservatory means a cucumber-frame, an ornamental sheet of water a puddle, "beautifully-timbered grounds" a laburnum and a few saplings, and undulating lawns a bumpy plot or two. It would have been hard for even a house-agent to have fallen into hyperbole had the colonel's marriage-gift found its way into his list of "desirable residences." There was a completeness about it, inside and out, which almost defied exaggeration. Though in London, it had a garden so cunningly laid out with serpentine walks, rosaries, and ferneries, and so skilfully planted with shrubberies and lime-trees, that, although barely an acre in extent, a stroll through it, assisted by a little imagination, was quite like a country walk to Clive. Here, in her leisure moments, she went in very keenly for gardening, "the purest of all human pleasures," as Lord Bacon has said; and though her extraordinary notions on the subject of grafting, transplanting, and pruning often led to the most dire results, she never roused the ire of the gardener, as a rule the most tyrannical and cantankerous of domestics.

Peaceful and happy beyond the lot of most mortals were Clive and her husband in their snug little home. But this internal harmony was not enough for her; she was anxious to be at peace with all the world, more especially their relatives, and conciliatory attempts were accordingly made on Lord Todmorden and Aunt Macnamara.

As regards his lordship, however, the attempt was not

successful. He was not to be conciliated. His marriage had not turned out a happy one. Lady Todmorden soon showed him that on her part, whatever it might have been on his, the union had been purely one of convenience. She chose her own companions—and he was never one; she gave herself up to dress and society; she flirted outrageously; and, perhaps, unkindest cut of all, she laughed heartily and openly at his inventive genius, his wonderful schemes, and miraculous contrivances. Altogether, he was bitterly conscious that he had never made a greater *faux pas* in all his life, and his lot was now that repentance at leisure which we are told is invariably the sequent to a marriage in haste. His only solace under the circumstances was to attribute, as people who make mistakes are very fond of doing, the blame solely to someone else. It was somebody else's fault is a much more natural and comfortable conclusion to come to than that it was your own.

On his nephew's shoulders Lord Todmorden laid all the blame of his own mistake, and to have forgiven him would have been to dash from his lips the only little crumb of comfort left him to nibble at in his desolation. Yes, he had been the victim of ingratitude. He had been driven to take this fatal step wholly and solely by his nephew's unnatural and undutiful conduct. This was the line he adopted.

Thus, although in his heart he was as fond and as proud as ever of his nephew, the old man took up a position of injured innocence and repelled all advances. To drive dull care away, he took more keenly than ever to the practical development of those utilitarian principles he was so devoted to. It has been already said that in politics he was whatever was out, that he might abuse whatever was in, and the Liberal party being at this time in power he firmly believed, or said he did, that the country was fast drifting towards Communism; and as under these circumstances it behoved everyone to rely on his own exertions, and to show his friends that he was equal to any emergency,

he actually took to making his own clothes. On this her ladyship, who was obliged to see him once or twice during the day, remarked that life now seemed to her a perpetual 5th of November. The verdict of Society was that "old Hot Toddy was madder than ever," and in general conversation his name was usually mentioned in connection with a hatter or a March hare.

Sometimes uncle and nephew would meet each other face to face on the pavement, and the latter, who of course did not in the least resent the rejection of his friendly overtures, never missed the opportunity of trying to improve the occasion. But Lord Todmorden would have no reconciliation whatever.

"Confound it, sir!" he would say to his nephew, "I don't want you to throw your pity to me, as you would a bone to a dog. Go to the deuce, sir! I never was jollier in all my life. Tra-la-la-lee, whack-falladdity. By Jove! that's a pretty girl! Ri-fol-lol-ti-tiddle-lol."

And off he would go in his home-made coat, swinging his cane, winking at the girls, and humming tunes as if he were bursting with gleeful spirits. But when he had gone a short way down the street or turned the corner and got out of sight, the knowing wink, the jaunty air, and the joyful carol would speedily desert him, and he would relapse into the miserable old man he really was.

Even less successful was the attempt on Aunt Macnamara. In fact, it turned out a dreadful *fiasco*. Miss Belmont received her niece with, if possible, an exacerbation of acidity. What little affection there was in her composition, over and above what was centred in herself, was now bestowed on a wretched little mouse-coloured Italian greyhound, which she had taken to herself after leaving her brother's roof. Even Miss Macnamara Belmont had required something to love, and this little dog was the only living thing which occupied a chilly place in the Arctic regions of her affections.

The visit was not of a jubilant nature. Clive went by herself, as she feared some of Dorrien's outspoken remarks —he detested Aunt Mac—might defeat the object of the visit; and she threw as much affection as she could possibly muster into the greeting with her aunt.

"I am sorry to see in you, Clive, evidences of the same taste for dress you used to have; but which I had hoped a sense of the responsibilities of your new position would have cured," was the ungracious opening speech of Miss Macnamara Belmont.

"But, aunt——"

"Nonsense, child; there can be no 'buts' about such a question. What can be more foolish, more wicked, than to allow one's mind to be occupied by dress, and to throw away on it money which might be devoted to the alleviation of suffering humanity? Do you never think—— Dear me, Clive! don't drag about Alphonso in that way. You will spoil his jacket, which, with its embroidery and silver bells, must have cost me at least two guineas."

Alphonso was the pet dog already mentioned; a miserable little mouse-coloured Italian greyhound, so addicted to shivering with cold—even in his two-guinea jacket—that had he fallen into a fiery furnace, he would probably have been frozen to death before they could have got him out.

Clive desisted from her attempt to instil a little life into Alphonso, by rolling him over with her foot, as he had tremblingly examined her boot, and inwardly congratulated herself upon "Having left Crib outside."

"Crib" was a disreputable-looking little dog, passionately devoted to his mistress and sport, who was now sitting on Miss Belmont's doorstep, intently watching the door through which his mistress had disappeared, after having given him a tap on the head with her parasol as an injunction to remain where he was and behave himself. Crib was not exactly a lady's dog, but Clive had saved him from being cut off in early puppyhood by "fiends, in shape of boys,"

and his gratitude, which took the form of constant companionship, was irrepressible.

In vain Clive tried to lead her grim aunt into lighter and more genial paths of conversation. Aunt Mac evidently did not mean to thaw on the occasion—quite the contrary, and the longer the visit lasted the more frigid she became. The apartment was about as lively as a dentist's waiting-room, and gradually Clive, in spite of the most strenuous efforts to be lively, fell under the depressing influences of the *genius loci*. The gaps in the dialogue became wider and wider, and there were long periods of stillness broken only by the subdued tinkle of the bells on the ever-trembling Alphonso's embroidered coat.

It was a great relief then to Clive, when the door was opened and some visitors appeared. But relief was soon succeeded by horror. Barely had the servant pronounced their names, when the most piercing yells from Alphonso electrified every one. Crib, it appeared, had seized the opportunity of the visitors' admittance to join his mistress, and never before having enjoyed the luxury of tackling so bloated an aristocrat as a dog who wore a coat, had eagerly availed himself of the treat, and was now shaking Alphonso, until his bells and his yells, added to the screams of Aunt Mac and the two lady visitors, made the afternoon hideous. After several minutes' persuasion with a poker and three parasols, Crib at last consented to release his victim, and Alphonso was snatched up to undergo a searching examination for those fearful wounds, through which it was dreaded his valuable life was fast ebbing. Luckily for him, however, Crib, in his inexperience of canine attire, had seized the two-guinea coat instead of the natural one, and there was no great harm done. But the shock to Alphonso's nerves had been fearful, and he was seized with such spasms of shaking that the continuous agitation of his bells was suggestive of a muffin-boy in delirium tremens.

Having satisfied herself that her pet's tremulous exist-

ence had not been quite cut short, Miss Belmont turned on Clive like a fury.

"Go; your presence is obnoxious. To a mind steeped, saturated, reeking with folly as yours is, this may be a capital joke—probably, has been a planned one. But I don't choose to be a subject for your buffoonery. Select some other object, some other scene for it than myself or my house. Never come here again; there is nothing in common between us and nothing to bring us together. Go, leave my house, and never set foot in it again."

Before paying her visit, Clive had schooled herself, for Daddles' sake, to a worm-like condition of spirit; but she had not anticipated such a trial of it as this, and with flashing eyes and heightened colour she gave it back to Aunt Mac in her own coin.

"If I am saturated with folly, I have not, at all events, reached that point when I would give two guineas for a wretched little dog's coat, and then preach a sermon about throwing away money on dress instead of giving it to the poor. Folly by itself is bad; but folly with hypocrisy is worse. I cannot say I'm sorry for what my dog has done. My only surprise is that he did not fly at you instead, for he hates old cats even more than wretched little curs."

So saying, Clive marched out of the room, leaving Miss Belmont livid and speechless with fury, and Crib, with elevated tail and prancing step, brought up the rear, as if marching out with all the honours of war.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### LITTLE LIZ.

At about four o'clock on a certain afternoon, some months after he had left the service under the strong pressure already described, Captain Garstang sauntered down the Strand on the look-out for anything which might catch the eye or occupy the mind. The last few months had wrought a decided change in him. He still retained his good looks, for, whatever else might be said against him, good looks Captain Garstang unquestionably possessed, though of a raffish, flashy order, and he was still fashionably dressed; but there was a sour look in his face—a brooding air about him which told a tale of slights and snubs, of droppings off of old companions, and of inward chafing. His abrupt retirement from the service and simultaneous secession from his clubs looked "fishy;" and this, added to his previous shady reputation, made him a character to be met, first with a cool nod, then a distant bow, and, finally, a dead cut. Among the first to give him the cold shoulder had been his once most intimate friends—naturally so, for they were men who, like himself, only cared to know people who could be of use to them.

This social ostracism cut him to the quick. It cut him in two ways. As a matter of sentiment it wounded his

*amour propre* (a man, whatever he may do, is always so ready to make allowances for himself, while the world is so exactly the reverse, that the last thing he loses is his self-respect); and, as a matter of £ *s. d.*, it was a shot 'twixt wind and water. Society on a good substantial foundation had been worth the greater part of his income to him in cards, betting, and amateur horse-dealing; but to have betted, played cards, or had a "deal" with those whose society he was now thrown upon, if he would have any society at all, would have been an exceedingly profitless transaction. Not only his good name, but his purse—not "trash" in *his* estimation—had, he felt, been filched from him, and the man whom he regarded as the robber, and on whom he heaped all the bitter hatred he was capable of, was Studholme Dorrien. He brooded over this hatred and thirsted so for revenge, that it became almost a mania with him; and what stirred this ill blood to fever-heat was the maddening sense of his own powerlessness to reach his enemy. He met him sometimes in the streets, and would fix on him a scowl of hatred which would have made most men feel uncomfortable, but which glanced off Dorrien's armour of cool self-possession like a child's arrow off the side of an ironclad, and Garstang would walk on eating his heart in impotent rage. When on the Rialto Antonio spat at Shylock's gaberdine, the act, measured by the sting it inflicted, was a compliment compared to Dorrien's utter indifference as he passed Garstang on the London pavements. To have shot a poisoned arrow between the joints of that stout armour, and to have left it rankling, would have been a gratification of his revengeful lust, to have afforded himself which Garstang would have stuck at nothing. He would have out-Shylocked Shylock.

But in these days of advanced civilisation it is very hard to know what to do with your enemy, if you have one. Under the good old feudal system, if you had been a man of position, you might have forcibly abducted him, thrown him nto the "lowest dungeon 'neath the castle moat," where you

might have extracted one tooth a day, cut off his eyelids, or done anything ingenuity and spite suggested, without any chance of interference or legal consequences; or, at all events, you might at least have stuck him in the back when he wasn't looking without being dragged off by a policeman. But now, alas! it is different; we have changed all that. If you fall on him with a bludgeon, he may turn out to be a better hand at it than you are, in addition to which, you will be subjected to all sorts of ignominies—fined, bound over to keep the peace, kept cooling your wrath on prison diet, etc. And to be soundly thrashed, fined, or imprisoned, allays one's thirst for revenge just about as much as a red herring would assuage one's thirst for liquid. Even if you resort to the comparatively mild proceeding of writing your enemy an anonymous letter calculated to cause him a little annoyance, the chances are it recoils on your own head. By the aid of an expert and circumstantial evidence, he finds you out in a twinkling, and again you get the worst of it. You may certainly, if by chance you catch your enemy in some parts of Italy, Sicily, or Greece, enter into a bargain concerning him with certain adventurous spirits of the country without much fear of detection; but, even here, there is the drawback that while in the very act of arranging the job, you may find one of your ears being packed up and addressed to your friends, with an intimation that the remainder of you will follow in regular instalments until they have paid the price put upon you; and this, as it provokingly happens, is one of those rare occasions where the price put upon a man by others greatly exceeds his own figure. Altogether, nowadays, a man who owes another a heavy grudge, and is anxious to pay it, is surrounded by difficulties. All these difficulties did Garstang weigh; personal violence, though at some moments it would temptingly suggest itself, was out of the question. What he would have liked—what he longed for—was to embitter the other life a hundredfold more than his own was now

being embittered; he could not, however, no matter how much he turned it over in his mind, see his way to it.

To resume. It was getting dusk as Captain Garstang sauntered along the Strand. That the saunter and the close of the day should have been simultaneous was natural, for, after the custom of shady characters, he was becoming owl-like in his hours of exercise. He did not remain long in the Strand; seeing a by-street leading off the thoroughfare, he turned down it, not because business or pleasure took him in the direction, but because it is another peculiarity of shadiness to prefer by-ways.

He had not gone far when he came to a large establishment where military embroidery and military cap-making seemed to be the principal objects of industry. There was little attempt at "dressing" the windows, there were merely a few forage caps for bandsmen, cavalry, and volunteers, and one or two regulation embroidered cuffs and collars for officers, deputy-lieutenants, etc. In the first place, so few people passed down the street that there would have been hardly any admirers; in the second, the establishment enjoyed so well-known a reputation, and so large a connection, that there was no need for any adventitious aids or attractions to custom. As Garstang passed the shop, several young girls, evidently workers in the establishment, emerged from the side-door, and, after a few moments of laughter and conversation, dispersed in their respective directions. Garstang surveyed the group carelessly at first, but suddenly he gave a start of surprise, and, instead of walking on, pretended to inspect the deputy-lieutenant's facings, while he scrutinised one of the girls with strange curiosity.

"Queer, deuced queer!" he soliloquised, as the little sempstress he particularly watched turned a bright laughing face to wish "Milly," and "Nelly," and "Liza," and the rest of her companions "Good-night," and then tripped off down the street.

In a few moments Captain Garstang was on her track.

Unconscious of the attention, the girl walked down the street at a rate which soon took her on to the Embankment, and here Garstang quickened his pace, and speedily passed her, purposely doing so as a gas lamp shed its rays on her face.

"Queer, deuced queer!" he again soliloquised as he took a furtive side-glance; and then, crossing over to the other side of the road, so as to avoid exciting her suspicion, he loitered until she had again gone to the front. Was the little sempstress game for conversation, he wondered? Apparently not, was evidently his opinion, for he continued merely to follow, without molesting her in any way.

As she neared Westminster Bridge, an erect, tough-looking old man with a wooden leg—evidently an old soldier—joined her, and the two trotted over the bridge very affectionately together.

At this juncture Garstang gave up the chase—for the day, at least; he knew where to find her. As the old man-o'-war hove in sight and convoyed the trim little craft, the pirate sheered off—a pirate flying a very black flag.

The following day, earlier in the afternoon, Garstang presented himself at the military embroiderer and cap-maker's establishment. There were no customers in the shop; most of the orders were received by post, and perhaps for half a day not a customer would enter, and then someone would come in and order articles by sets of dozens or fifties; the consequence was Garstang had the place all to himself. There was not even anyone to attend to him at first, and he occupied the time in making his observations. In a back-room, separated from the fore part of the shop by a glasswork partition, were some half-dozen girls embroidering and stitching, some by hand, some by machine. The door was partly open, and Garstang without being noticed took up a position where he could see and hear a little without being seen or heard himself, and soon made out his little friend of the previous evening. She

seemed to be a merry, talkative little creature, but, though her tongue was going very fast, her fingers seemed to go quite as nimbly. It soon became apparent that her name was "Lizzie," and whenever Lizzie opened her mouth there was sure to be a laugh; she was evidently the wag of the industrious little *coterie*, and there was one great heavy lump of a girl who seemed determined that none of Lizzie's coruscations of wit should be lost on her companions, for she kept up a constant refrain of "Oh! hark to Liz"—"Oh! did you hear Liz *that* time?"—"Oh! I say, *do* hark to Liz then."

All this Garstang took in by the time the owner of the establishment made his appearance with a perspiration on his brow, engendered by hot tea, which explained the delay.

"The officers of my regiment," said Garstang, "are about to adopt a new cap for the band. Now if you could suggest a stylish one, and make a pattern, I would submit it to the band committee, of which I'm the president, and I daresay we'd give you the order for the lot."

The military cap-maker at once became interested in the question, and was brimful of suggestions regarding the new cap. But one and all were rejected by Garstang.

"Wait a bit, sir," said the man; "I've a young lady here who might assist us. Miss Potts!"

There was a hush in the work-room, and little Lizzie made her appearance.

"Now, Miss Potts, here's a gentleman wants a cap for his regimental band—a nice tasty article. Let's see what you'd make up."

Crimsoning to the roots of her hair under Garstang's fierce gaze, the young girl took up some different coloured pieces of cloth, and soon suggested a tasteful combination with some suitable embroidery.

Garstang thought that would do very nicely, and gave an order for a cap of the description to be made for approval.

"Sharp little girl, that, sir," said the cap-maker, as Lizzie returned to the work-room, "and as good as she's sharp. She keeps all of them alive in there, and I find the livelier they are the better they work."

Garstang received this communication carelessly, and merely saying that he hoped the cap would meet with his approval, left the shop.

At the hour when he had seen the girls leave the establishment the previous evening, he was at the top of the street watching for their appearance, and when the little sempstress came out and walked down to the Embankment he again followed. This time she was accompanied by the heavy girl, and the two walked on arm-in-arm, evidently in the highest spirits.

From his observations of the previous evening—her quiet demeanour in the streets and the way she hurried on without looking to the right or to the left—he gathered that, with all her sharp pertness in the back shop amongst the girls, she would have resented, struggling little sempstress though she might have been, any impertinent attempt to address her on the part of a stranger, no matter how oily his tongue or how fashionable his clothes. But this evening, under the wing of her enormous friend and admirer, she evidently considered herself efficiently escorted, and there was about her an air of greater confidence than when by herself the previous evening. That Miss Milly Pounceby—that was the name of the heavy girl—should inspire all this confidence was very natural, for it was the general belief in the work-room that fisticuffically, if not matrimonially speaking, she was a match for any man.

As the two walked along the Embankment, Garstang quickened his pace and came up alongside the smaller one.

"I beg your pardon," he said, in his politest tones, "I forget to mention that I should like that cap to be ready for my inspection the day after to-morrow, if it could be

managed. I recognised you by the merest chance, and I hope I haven't startled you."

This last apology referred to ejaculations of "Oh, Lauks!" from the little one, and "Oh, Jimini-cracks!" from Miss Milly Pounceby, as Garstang had suddenly interrupted some confidential communications.

It was impossible, however, to be offended at either the manner or the remarks of the speaker, and, emboldened by the presence of Milly Pounceby, who was now playfully pinching her arm and giggling, the little sempstress replied that they would be sure to have the cap finished in the required time.

The insidious Garstang thanked her very politely, but instead of leaving them, he continued to walk by their side, and managed, as from experience he well knew how, to get up a conversation on more general topics. He was very anxious to find out more about her, and, after feeling his way cautiously, commenced a pumping sort of catechism. The little catechee, however, stood on the defensive sturdily, and treated him to a few specimens of her sharpness, to the inexpressible enjoyment of Milly Pounceby.

"Is this your way home?" he asked.

"P'r'aps."

"I think I saw you on Westminster Bridge last evening. Who was that distinguished military-looking gentleman, with an artificial leg, I saw with you?"

"Ah! that's tellin's."

"Was he your father?"

"Oh! wouldn't you like to know, now?"

"I hope I don't appear impertinently curious, but it is interest rather than curiosity which prompts me to ask these questions."

"Oh! yes, I dessay."

And so on. At each of these answers, Milly Pounceby was convulsed, and to give vent to her admiration and delight kept on whispering to herself, "Oh! hark to Liz;"

"Oh! ain't she spiflicating him and hanging him out to dry, just!"

To be candid, however, there was a good deal of sameness in the little sempstress' style of repartee. It seemed to consist solely in ringing the changes on, "Wouldn't you like to know?" "Oh, I dessay," and "Ah! that's tellin's." But this was probably because her range of fire was cramped, owing to her acting purely on the defensive, instead of, as she would have done had she felt more at home, carrying the war occasionally into the enemy's camp.

Garstang was a persevering dog, however, when he had an object in view, and, notwithstanding all this fencing, managed eventually to elicit that the old soldier with the wooden leg was her father; that Milly Pounceby was her "bosom friend" (and a very appropriate term for her, too, thought Garstang as he glanced at Miss Pounceby's plump figure); and that father met her every night at Westminster Bridge, and walked home with her to Lambeth; and that on this occasion Milly Pounceby was accompanying her home to tea.

At this point the wooden leg was descried in the offing, and Garstang retired.

This was not the last time that Garstang accompanied the little sempstress in her homeward walk along the Embankment. By degrees she became dangerously at home in his society. Before the week was out she called him "a great stupe," and not many days afterwards, "a sillybilly;" and before long the wooden leg was not a more constant attendant at the head of Westminster Bridge than Garstang at the end of the military cap-maker's street.

* * * * *

After a time, a change seemed to come over the work-

room at the back of the shop, and it was very quiet and dull. There was not much "Hark to Liz!" for Liz was not much to "hark to" now. She never made any jokes, but sat at her work, silent and pensive.

## CHAPTER XX.

### HOUSEHOLD GODS.

THE establishment over which Clive presided so cheerily was of course not a large one, but what there was of it was very complete and conducted on a liberal and comfortable scale. She and her husband could not be counted rich in worldly wealth, but their income, though small compared with the incomes of many of their friends, was still quite large enough to enable them to mix freely and comfortably in the society they chose to surround themselves with. The great secret of this was that they never strove to appear more than what they were. Society, in these matters, invariably sails under false colours. Incomes, in the result as well as the attempt, resemble the frog who tried to look like an ox and burst. They are always swelling themselves out to look bigger than they really are. Five hundred a year tries to look like a thousand, a thousand like two, ten thousand like fifteen, and so on.

But Dorrien and Clive hoisted their true flag, and let it wave openly, neither proud of it with the pride which apes humility, nor ashamed of it with the littleness which is ashamed of small means. They were hospitable without being ostentatious. If Dorrien asked some men from his club, or a few old brother-officers, or some of his or Clive's

friends or relations to dine, there was no necessity to bring in the coachman and his help—they kept a small brougham and one horse—redolent of the stable, or the gardener, who knew more about side-beds than side-dishes, to swell the array of domestics. Or if old Lord and Lady Gollopdown —kinsfolk of Clive's, a very nice old couple, though a little over addicted to good living—asked them to dine several times, they asked them back again without any fearful misgivings, because their cook was a female with thirty pounds a year, while Lord Gollopdown's was a French *chef* with the salary of a British major-general. And, strange to say, old Lord and Lady Gollopdown always enjoyed their dinners, and consequently themselves, amazingly when they dined with Mr. and Mrs. Dorrien.

Lord Gollopdown was very particular, too, on these points, and always carried about with him a post-prandial self-measuring test, a gastronometer, as it might be called, of simple contrivance—his arms and hands, in fact. If after dining he could clasp his hands together just under the third button of his waistcoat, the meal had been a failure. But if he was unable to measure his past performance in this way, he would observe to his host, if he dined out, or to his wife, if he dined in, "I've enjoyed myself beyond measure." He always enjoyed himself beyond measure at the Dorriens.

The fact was, there was not a pleasanter house to dine at in all London. To begin with, what ought to be the last consideration, but is not—the wines were unexceptionable. When he had stocked the cellar, the old colonel had brought a jealous eye, a liberal hand, and a connoisseur's palate to bear on the work, and the general verdict of Dorrien's male friends was, "not a headache in a bucketful of his liquor." This is a glowing panegyric on a man moving in society. Of such a one say, "A nobler heart than his beats not in human breast," and I don't know whether you will be impressing society very much with a sense of his worth; but

say, "No better wine than his is to be found in any cellar," and you will be pronouncing a much higher eulogium upon him, socially speaking.

Dorrien was a shrewd man who had seen a great deal of the world, and though in ordinary society he was considered a little too dogmatic and overbearing, in his own home he toned down into a very pleasant and agreeable host. A man who is bearish to people in his own house is a perfect brute out of it.

Clive made a charming little hostess. Her gaiety and happiness were quite infectious. There was no withstanding her. She always put her guests into good humour with themselves, and, what is still better, with everybody else. There was no preoccupation of her mind caused by a nervous dread of, in the eye of her husband, saying or doing the wrong thing before people. Nagging was a thing unknown between her and Dorrien. I do not mean to imply that she was perfect. A fidgety husband she would have driven wild in as short a time as any other woman, for, if the truth be told, she had her full share of that feminine faculty for catching dresses in odd projections, sweeping off things with sleeves, knocking over articles with trains, and occasionally falling to pieces at inopportune moments. But fidgetiness was a long way beneath Dorrien's temperament, and not an impatient look or word did he ever visit upon her for these trifling sins. Not that Dorrien was by any means an angel in temper; but simply these matters did not rise to that point at which, with him, temper began.

And when Clive saw how some other husbands, kind and loving enough probably at heart and at home, were always when in society catching up their wives or taking them down, and driving them out of sheer nervousness into *faux pas* of which they never would have been guilty had their lords been not quite so anxious to save them from committing them, she would feel very grateful that Dorrien was not one of these. And when on the other side—for of course

there *is* another side—Dorrien heard of and witnessed the extravagance, heartlessness, and infidelity of other wives, he was too sensible of the worth of his own to think it a heinous sin because she knocked over Lady Sarah Mainyer's china saucer with her dress one day, or asked old Sir Grimshaw Holdertite after his wife, when it was a matter of public notoriety that she had bolted with a captain of Hussars the week before. And yet such trifles as these are they which often raise a typhoon in the matrimonial tea-cup.

The great difficulty at first was to keep their social circle within moderate bounds. People they knew little of, and for whom they cared still less, descended upon them in shoals.

"Have you called on the Dorriens yet? We met them the other evening, you know, at Sir Charles Fluffington's," asked Mrs. Mayne-Chance.

"Well, no," replied Mrs. McTurtle, the lady addressed, whose husband had a mushroom fortune of about thirty thousand a year, and not an "h" in the right place. "They are a couple of rather small means, I imagine, and hardly able perhaps to——ahem!"

Which last sound being interpreted meant, "mix in our circle."

"Well, they are not very wealthy, perhaps," replied Mrs. Mayne-Chance, "but they have a charming little house, and very good prospects. I myself don't believe for a moment old Lord Todmorden will ever have an heir, in which case Mr. Dorrien, who is his nephew and heir-presumptive, succeeds him. And *she* was a Miss Belmont, and very highly connected indeed; Lord Gollopdown is a first-cousin of her father, Colonel Belmont, and Lady Catherine Belmont is also a relation of hers."

"Oh! indeed," said Mrs. McTurtle, and before half an hour had elapsed her yellow chariot was in front of the Dorriens' house, and her red-plushed and powdered footman was thundering at the door.

"Dear me, it is rather a small establishment; I hope I shan't be impressing them too much," said Mrs. McTurtle, as she lolled back in her yellow chariot and surveyed the house through a massive gold eye-glass.

"Oh! Stud, here's the old McTurtle in her mustard-pot. Let's say we're out," remarked Clive exactly at the same moment, so impressed was she, poor little creature.

Of the Mayne-Chances, the McTurtles, and such people, it was hard to keep clear; but at all events they did not do much harm, and were sometimes rather amusing.

After a time Clive did not care very much about balls. She went to them at first, but it gradually dawned upon her that if a woman prefers her own husband to other men—and other men always appeared tame and insipid compared to Dorrien—and took a pleasure and interest in her own home, that an occasional ball went a long way, and was quite sufficient. So wrapped up was she in Dorrien, so attached to her home, consecrated in her eyes as the gift of "darling old Daddles," so fond of her pets, of her garden, and everything connected with her domestic life, that she did not require that constant change and excitement so necessary to many women, to whom home seems a necessary evil to be endured occasionally.

Dorrien never said a word to influence her in this course. If she liked to go to balls it was very natural, most young women did like balls, and he was willing to take her and endure a few hours' boredom for her sake. But when she, of her own accord, renounced them, he was not exactly the man to try and alter her decision. He was more behind the scenes than she was, and he knew that with all its glitter, soft strains, and smiling faces, a London ball-room, though at the same time there might be a great deal of innocent enjoyment in it, was a stronghold of heartlessness, vanity, frivolity, and something else with a harder name.

Thus serenely and peacefully did Clive's life glide

onwards, and the old colonel's prediction that, as the wife of Studholme Dorrien, his little daughter's earthly happiness would be built on a rock seemed each succeeding day to be more and more verified.

Amongst their visitors were many old regimental friends, but conspicuous by his strange unaccountable absence was Dolly Jones, the one who would have been the most welcome of all. They were, notwithstanding all their efforts, losing sight of him altogether. He had vanished no one knew where. Dorrien sometimes heard from a man at his club that when in a hansom driving through extraordinary places he had caught sight of Dolly, but nothing more could he find out about him. Dorrien admitted to Clive that he was fairly posed, and could not make out what was Dolly's game, though previously he had always thought him one of the most transparent individuals he had ever met. Clive, however, shook her head very knowingly, and thought, with a melting heart for her old friend, that she could make a shrewd guess at the cause of Dolly's mysterious behaviour.

"That horrid wretch of a girl," Clive would say to herself at times; "she's at the bottom of it all. She's the only person in the world I hate, and I *do* hate her, though I've never seen her, nor do I even know who she is."

## CHAPTER XXI.

### "A YEAR TO-DAY."

"How the time flies, Stud!"

"Putting it at the smallest computation, that is at least the second time I have heard that remark, Clive. Indeed, I believe it was the first Latin sentence I ever had hammered into me."

"Ah, but it doesn't always fly, Stud. It crawls sometimes when you're away. Did you ever get *that* hammered into you'?"

"No, that's better. We're improving. And considering the time you've been married, it really is a strikingly original remark for a wife to make to her husband."

"Yes, it isn't so bad for an old married couple like us, is it? Fancy, Stud, we've been married a year to-day, and it seems little more than a week. I really think we ought to send in our claims for the flitch of bacon. I am sure we're entitled to it, if ever a couple were. Stud, darling," she said, suddenly changing her tones, and putting her arms round him, while tears of tenderness and love filled her eyes, "we haven't had a single quarrel, and not a sharp, unkind word have you spoken to me."

"Well, it's been all your own fault, Clive. You couldn't expect me to go out of my way to call you names if you wouldn't do anything to deserve them, could you?"

"I am sure I have, Stud; as much as nine women out of ten; but you are always so ready with allowances for me, that you never see when I'm in the wrong. Darling old Stud—a year to-day! As one arrives at these landmarks in life, one naturally pauses to look back a little, and also to look forward. Oh! Stud, I do so hope and pray all the years of our lives together will be like the past. I shall never change, Stud."

"Come, come, what's the little woman crying about?" said Dorrien, drawing her close to himself. "You say you're surveying the past and the future from your standpoint of our wedding-day anniversary. There's nothing to regret in the past, and nothing to fear in the future. You've been everything a wife should be and a great deal more, thank God! than most wives are; and, as far as we can see, everything looks bright and hopeful before us. At all events, you may depend upon it I shan't take to shying the crockery about, or indulge in any playful ebullitions with the poker, or caressing you occasionally with the carving-knife. So, if you're equally confident of your own share in the business, what's there to cry about?"

"I don't know, Stud; my heart is very full to-day."

"And so it is every day, little woman—always full of goodness and affection."

He patted her cheek wet with her tears, and called her his darling little wife.

Though loving her with his whole heart and considering her in every action of his life, Dorrien was not given to the "own darling," "tootsey-wootsey," "poppolorum-tibby" style of conversation with his wife, and Clive acknowledged the much-prized endearment by an extra nestle.

"That's where you're always so kind, Stud. Some men in their strength and power laugh at women's little weaknesses, and walk over their feelings as if they were trampling over a ploughed field with a pair of shooting-boots on; but you, although you are so manly with it all, are so conside-

rate. And I'm sure just a word to a woman to show that her nature, even if it isn't understood, is considered, is worth a hundred new dresses and bonnets."

"By Jove!" said Dorrien, with a good-natured laugh, "if that were really the case, Clive, and generally known, you'd find husbands the most considerate and gentle creatures in the world, and the study of woman-nature would become the most absorbing pursuit of married men."

Here a postman's knock resounded through the house, and a servant brought in a couple of letters, one for Clive and the other for Dorrien.

A postman, as he hurries from door to door, holds in his hand joy and sorrow, business and pleasure, love and hate. But never did a postman carry two missives of more opposite natures, than those which lay side by side on the silver salver. It was almost a wonder the very ink in which the loving sentences of one were written did not curdle at the contact with the spite and venom contained in the other.

With an exclamation of delight, Clive seized hers, which she saw by the left-handed writing on the envelope was from "Daddles," and tore it open with eager fingers.

"Oh, Stud!" she exclaimed with glistening eyes, after a few moments' perusal; "he's coming home in about three months. And he says—the darling, just fancy his remembering it and calculating it so nicely,—he says we'll most likely receive his letter on our wedding-day, and that when we are reading it he will probably be drinking our healths. Oh! Stud, how happy we shall all be together. Shan't we? What was your letter about?"

"Nothing worth thinking of for one moment," he replied, as he tore it up into fragments and threw it away with a contemptuous "Pish!"

"Nothing at all, little woman," he repeated, as he took her face between his two hands and turned it up, after the

manner of the Huguenot in the picture, until her truthful eyes looked honestly and lovingly into his.

> Be thou chaste as ice, as pure as snow,
> Thou shalt not escape calumny,

occurred to his mind as he looked, and then stooping down he gave her a kiss.

"This is all very demonstrative for you, Stud. I think it's an improvement, rather," she said, as he released her face.

"Well," he replied gaily, "if a man is a little extra affectionate on his wedding-day, it's allowable I suppose. So the old governor is coming home, eh? Your cup of happiness will be full to the brim now, won't it, Clive?"

"Yes, Stud darling. I shan't have a thing to wish for in life then."

"Neither shall I. Now read me the old boy's letter."

Clive at once complied; and as Dorrien listened to her soft voice, broken sometimes with emotion as she read her father's loving words, there was not a drop of gall in his mind. He could listen to her gentle tones, could look on her fair face, could feel her soft touch (she had placed her hand in his while she read), without a single bitter thought.

Why should there have been?

There was really no reason whatever why there should have been; but still most men under similar circumstances, no matter how they struggled against them, no matter how utterly unfounded they appeared, would have been the prey to painful doubts and alarms.

That letter which lay torn up at his feet had been cast away from Dorrien's mind as easily as it had been thrown from his hand. It was the base and cowardly attempt of an anonymous writer to poison a trusting husband's mind. There were no direct accusations, but there were vile insinuations and hypocritical warnings worthy of Iago. The whole complicated machinery of jealousy, doubts within doubts,

fears built upon fears—can often be set in motion by one skilful touch. There is no occasion to use a powerful lever.

> Trifles, light as air,
> Are to the jealous confirmation strong
> As proofs of holy writ.

But Dorrien was not jealous. Never was man less so, and never did villany shoot a more effete bolt.

The man in the story who shot at a ghost and had the bullet politely returned to him, or the assassin—also in a story—who ran his sword up to the hilt in his intended victim's back, and was merely requested to "leave off that tickling," could not have been more astonished than the writer of this anonymous letter would have been, could he have looked into Studholme Dorrien's heart and seen it as free from doubts and fears as it had ever been. Not the slightest effect had the poison taken.

Dorrien's peace of mind it had not disturbed for the space of one single second, and his equanimity it had ruffled merely to the extent of a passing desire to grip the writer by the throat. But even this very natural sentiment was of short duration. The act was too contemptible to keep his wrath warm. Of course, if by any possibility the writer had suddenly been delivered into his hands, he would have half-strangled him, as he would have crushed a scorpion on his hearth. But it would have been done as a matter of duty and in comparative cold blood. He felt himself too safe in his position to care for the spatterings of a pen dipped in gall. If he had stood on the summit of Mont Blanc, and looked down through a telescope at a little boy at its base trying to throw dirt at him, he would have been about as much terrified and annoyed.

"We live and learn," thought Dorrien, with a careless shrug of the shoulder. "I certainly knew that I had not gone through life, so far, without making a few enemies, and I also knew that the heart of man is desperately wicked; but

hang me, if I knew that I had so kind a friend, or that so noble a creature walked the earth as the writer of this letter. At all events, Clive shan't be told anything about it; she shan't even know that such things are."

"Come along, little woman," he said gaily; "come along and show me your rosery."

And whipping her in his arms, he carried her laughing merrily out into the bright sunshine.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### DOUBTS AND FEARS.

LIKE a pure and clear stream rippling over golden sands, Clive's life was now flowing brightly onward. In delightful consciousness of present happiness, mingled with glowing anticipations of still greater joy, her days passed.

What pleasure it was to sit and think that the passing moments, which in themselves were fraught with so much that was pleasant, were also bringing "her dear old father" nearer and nearer to her; and her heart would often leap with joy at the thought of seeing his loved old face so soon. His return was her one absorbing thought, and there were few actions of her life now into which some considerations for him did not enter. It was very hard to sit still in passive expectation, and she felt she must always be up and doing. His room was prepared for him months before he could occupy it, and she even went to the extent of arranging exactly what they were to have for dinner on the day of his arrival, although that blissful day was still some months in the future.

One morning Clive was in her rosery nipping away the dead leaves, and snipping off many a valuable shoot under the impression that she was doing a great deal of good in

the way of pruning, when a hail from Dorrien cut short her occupation and the carol accompanying it.

"Here's a telegram, Clive, I want to speak to you about."

He looked serious. Her cheeks and lips became ashy white in a moment, and she rushed to meet him as he advanced with the telegram in his hand.

"Stud, Stud, is it from India?" she asked, trembling from head to foot.

"No, no, Clive; it's not. No bad news about your father; he's all right."

"Oh, I do feel so thankful! Oh, Stud, what a fright it has given me! Those awful telegrams, how they do bring one's heart up into one's mouth, and then when one opens them they're generally just to say, 'Come and meet Robinson at dinner to-night,' or, 'Have my dress clothes sent to the club,' or something equally appalling; and I never learn by experience to take them coolly. But, Stud, you look serious. What is the matter? What can it be?"

Clive had evidently had an idea that if Stud were safe and sound before her, and nothing were wrong with her father, there could not be a screw loose anywhere.

"The old uncle is ill down at his place in Northamptonshire, Clive—dangerously ill, poor old boy; apoplexy or something of that kind. At all events, something sudden and serious, and this is a telegram from the doctor there, saying I had better go down at once."

"Oh! go then, Stud. Don't lose a moment. I can fancy how, lying on his bed of sickness, his injustice to you must reproach him, and how he must long to take you by the hand, and be counting the moments, and asking at every sound in the house if it's you. Don't lose a moment, darling, in going to him," she said, with the tears filling her eyes.

Her sympathies were always readily enlisted, and she had a knack of drawing the most touching little pictures in

her own mind of virtue in misfortune, vice in repentance, or any other quality in difficulties that came to hand.

"Well, I hadn't drawn such a vivid picture of his feelings as you have, Clive," said Dorrien, with a kindly smile at her well-known faculty, "but this I know, that if he could hear you he would be undergoing the operation of having coals of fire heaped on his head."

"Never mind that, Stud. He thought I wasn't good enough for you, and a very natural thing it was for him to think, poor old man. And then you must recollect, too, that it all arose out of his love for you, Stud."

"Well, you extraordinary little angel of forgiveness, let us hope that he'll yet live to learn that he has been mistaken—greatly mistaken; and that if he had thought *I* wasn't good enough for *you*, he'd have been nearer the mark."

I don't know that Studholme Dorrien was a religious man—I fear not; but there was in his heart at the moment an unuttered prayer of thanksgiving for the prize he had drawn in the matrimonial lottery.

"At the very best I shan't be able to get back here to-night, Clive; but, if everything goes well, I'll return to-morrow morning. You won't find it very dull without me, will you, little woman?"

"Of course I shall find it dull without you, Stud—I always should; but if you think you ought to stay a few days, a week, or a month even, don't think of coming back on my account. Be guided by circumstances down there, and don't for one moment let me interfere with what you think is your duty. There, Stud, there's the servant come to say your things are packed. Go, darling."

"Clive, you've got the old colonel's heart in that little body of yours," he said, as he kissed her fondly and hurried away.

In an hour he was whirling down into Northamptonshire

by the afternoon express, and Clive was sitting in her room feeling very lonely and miserable.

Dorrien was not the man to be always tied to his wife's apron-strings; he was a good deal at his clubs, and he mixed freely in men's society, of which he was fond. But he never left Clive moping at home in the evenings, and he never went out at any time without making some little arrangement with her as to how she was to amuse or occupy herself while he was away. This was the first time since their marriage that they had ever been separated for more than a couple of hours or so.

She found it impossible to settle down to any occupation or get interested in anything; she tried reading, writing, working, and playing the piano, but each attempt to occupy her mind was hopeless. The only thing she could do was to sit and think of him.

"Oh dear! it's very foolish of me, I'm like that lackadaisical young damsel in the song,

> I cannot work, I cannot play,
> I cannot sing when he's away.

I really didn't know I should have missed him like this; I don't think I ever realised how much I loved him until now, although I always thought I loved him as deeply as ever I could. And this may be for a week! How will it ever pass?"

At last she sat down and wrote him a long letter, for him to receive the first thing in the morning.

After this peep into Clive's thoughts, the reader very likely thinks that her letter was to tell Dorrien that she really felt his absence more than she thought she would have done—more than she could bear, and begging him to hurry back at any cost.

It was quite the contrary. Although feeling intensely miserable all the time, and with an aching at her heart, for

which she could hardly account, she enjoined him even more forcibly than she had done in the morning, not to allow any considerations for her to influence the duration of his stay with his sick uncle.

Later in the afternoon she drove out and shopped, but with Dorrien's departure to Northamptonshire there seemed to have been a sudden and startling fall in the population of the metropolis ; the streets looked empty and dull, and she soon had enough of them. But when she returned home the house looked emptier and duller still, and as she passed the dining-room door the sight of the table laid for one was depressing in the extreme. She might have asked some one to dine with her, but she knew what bad company she would be, and preferred being left alone with her own thoughts. The solitary meal was a mockery, notwithstanding all the cook's efforts to be irresistibly tempting.

Clive was a great favourite below-stairs, and when the news was there promulgated that "Missis was terrible down," the high-priestess of those regions had nobly exerted herself to comfort her ; "for a good dinner," the cook had remarked to her fellow-servants, "is the pan-is-'ere for all evils."

Her adaptation of the phrase, "the pan-is-'ere for all ills," was purely professional, and, in her eyes, it meant that where there was a pan or a pot, or any vessel impervious to the action of fire from without and of water from within (pan being a generic term for anything to cook in), the means of mitigating human suffering were to hand. If any one could say, "'Ere is the pan," "the pan is 'ere" (and here we have the very word), or, "Be'old the pan," the same in the hands of a skilful cook would soon lead to a happy solution of the trouble.

"I've knowed a sorrer cured by a omlick afore now, and so I tells yer," the cook had observed more than once to an admiring auditory, "and when you 'ear people talkin' about

'crumbs o' comfort,' what's meant is well-browned crumbs for partridge and sich like."

There were no big dishes and no joints for Clive's dinner, for the cook had said, "Great jints and big dishes is most likely to put 'er in mind master ain't 'ome to 'elp 'er eat 'em." A violet may grow in the shade of a lowly hedge, and why should not a delicate sentiment lurk in the bosom of a cook?

So there were all sorts of cunning and savoury little made dishes, and miniature *chefs-d'œuvre* of pastry, warranted to melt in the mouth like flakes of snow; and, if everything else failed, there was the devilled leg of a pheasant which might have coaxed an appetite out of a sea-sick voyager. But, on this occasion, it was a "devil" which failed to tempt, though Clive tried hard to do justice to the cook's kind forethought.

The evening was even harder to get through than the dinner, and it dragged along slowly.

"It is very foolish,—very wicked of me," said Clive, severely taking herself to task from an introspective point of view, "to give way so to this weakness, but I have a strange, undefinable feeling of impending evil which, somehow, I cannot battle against."

At last a happy thought occurred to her; she would write to her father. Page after page of foreign note she covered with the outpourings of her heart. "Why should it be so full to-night?" she wondered, as her pen strove in vain to keep pace with the rush of tender, loving thoughts she tried to put on the paper.

At about eleven o'clock, just as she was thinking of retiring, a hurried knock at the street-door sent her heart thumping wildly against her ribs.

"What could it be at this hour of the night? Stud said he did not think he would telegraph, for the house is so far from any station or post-office. It *is* a telegram, though,"

she exclaimed, as the servant entered with one, and, tearing the envelope open with trembling fingers, she read the following message :

"*From* S. DORRIEN,
"*etc. etc.*

"*To* MRS. DORRIEN,
"*etc. etc.*

"Two London doctors come down by special train from Euston at twelve to-night, come with them ; you are urgently required. Not worth bringing maid. Doctor J—— will meet you at Euston."

The summons was indeed startling.

"Poor old Lord Todmorden ! I suppose he's going fast, and is anxious to join Stud's and my hands before he goes ; perhaps, too, he thinks he was a little bitter against me, and wants to make his peace with me. Poor old man ! Yes, that must be the reason why I'm so urgently required—I can't imagine any other, in fact. I'll not lose a moment."

She hurriedly made her preparations for the journey, and was soon ready to start.

"Why should I feel so frightened, I wonder ? I suppose it must be the inner consciousness of so soon going into the awful presence of death for the first time."

Her last act before leaving her room was to kneel down and offer up a prayer.

"Better let me go with you, ma'am," said her maid at the very last moment, reiterating an oft-repeated request ; "you look frightened and timid, ma'am."

"No, no, Benton, thank you, your master said you had better not. I am going to a house where, I'm sorry to say, there won't be any occasion for much dressing, or anything of that sort ; it will be a house of mourning."

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### ABDUCTION.

"SPECIAL? No, miss, I ain't 'eard o' nothink o' the sort. *You* ain't 'eard o' any special ordered for Datcham, 'ave yer, Bill?"

"Well, no, I can't say as I 'ave," was the reply, after a long pause, during which the speaker had given hopes of brighter things by lifting his cap and scratching his head.

"Nor ain't seen two gen'l'men waitin' about to go by her?"

"No, I ain't. There was a special went down last Toosday."

The cap-lifting and head-scratching had at last borne fruit. Here was a bright emanation. The first porter evidently thought it worth following up.

"It warn't last Toosday, miss, you was thinking of, p'r'aps?"

"No, oh no! It was ordered for to-night, I'm perfectly sure," said Clive, who was engaged in the hopeless task of trying to get something rational out of two sleepy and overworked porters on the Euston Square platform.

The first porter had been bad enough by himself, but when his *confrère* joined the council of war, there was a gross miscarriage of the adage that two heads are better than one.

"P'r'aps you'd better see the platform superintendent, miss?"

"Yes, I think I had better," said Clive, with a sinking at her heart. "How strange!"

"Or the station-master," said the second porter, under the impression that he who got the last word would also get the "tip."

"Or the traffic manager's clerk," added the first porter under the same impression that, and on this occasion, it would be the late bird that would get the worm.

"Or the——," began both together.

"There, there's something for you both," said Clive, and the struggle for the last word ceased.

"Where shall I find the platform superintendent?"

"This way, miss," said a third porter appearing on the scene with an itching palm. *Cacoethes palmæ* is a complaint to which poor porters are terribly subject, and the sight of a well-dressed and unprotected young lady anxious for information and rather nervous was a strong stimulus to the disease.

"Under pain of instant dismissal," the third porter concluded his duty of guide at the platform superintendent's office.

Here Clive could hear nothing more about the special, except that it had not been ordered.

But Lord Todmorden was well known on the line, and on hearing that he was dangerously ill, and that the special had been required for the conveyance of two physicians, the superintendent thought the matter of sufficient importance to rouse up the station-master.

Neither had *he* heard anything, however, and Clive, whose blood had gradually been turning to water, felt inclined to sit down and have a good cry.

"'Ere's a cabman just drove up lookin' for a lady," said a porter at the door of the office. "Come on, cabby."

"This for you, mum? A gen'l'man told me to bring it to a lady I'd find here waitin' for a special train," said the

cabman in very wheezy tones, which came from a number of wraps and comforters, though the night was not particularly cold.

"Yes, oh yes, give it to me," said Clive, eagerly seizing a small note out of the cabman's greasily-gloved hand. "It's quite right, it's for me."

The note was written in pencil to this effect:

"11.35 P.M.

"DEAR MADAM,

"Lord Todmorden's case has taken so favourable a turn that the services of my colleague and myself are not required. I have just been apprised of this by telegram as I was on the point of starting, and have been requested to inform you of the same. As you will have left your home by this time, I take the quickest means at my disposal of communicating with you, and consign this note to a cabman who, I beg to add, has been paid for this service. Congratulating you on the cause which has rendered your journey and mine unnecessary,

"Believe me, Madam,

"Yours very truly."

Here followed a hieroglyphic which might have been anything, but which Clive of course accepted as the signature of one of the doctors mentioned in the telegram.

"At all events, this is a great relief," said Clive. "I'll go home again now as quickly as possible. I daresay I'll find another telegram there from Stud."

The cabman's punctual performance of his errand after prepayment being in her eyes a guarantee of his honesty, she engaged him for the homeward journey, and thankfully took her leave of the gloomy station.

"Capital horse he has got," she thought, as the cab rattled over the stones at an unusually rapid pace for a "growler." "So much the better, I shall get home all the quicker, and I feel a sort of yearning to be safe back again."

"Dear me," thought Clive, fully twenty minutes afterwards, "considering the pace we've been going at, I ought to have been home by this time, or at all events have reached some familiar regions!" and for some moments she peered through the window eagerly and in vain, looking out for some well-known landmarks. "What queer places we seem to be going through. Cabman," she said, pulling down the front window, "are you sure you're going the right way?"

"Oh yes, mum, never fear," replied the wheezy tones. "This 'ere's a short cut, takes yer out right agin yer place."

The short cut, however, gradually became a very long one, and still the cab rattled through an unknown region of narrow streets and poor-looking houses.

Clive became seriously alarmed, and she let down the front window again.

"Stop, please. I see we have just passed a house with a light. I'll ask if we are going right. I'm sure you must have made a mistake."

"Oh, it's all right, mum. Don't be afeared."

"But I am. Stop, please, at once. There's no harm in stopping to ask."

The man continued to drive on at a still quicker pace. Alarm now became terror.

"If you don't stop, I'll scream for help."

The cabman chucked at his reins and chirruped to his horse.

Clive carried her threat into execution, but her scream was drowned in the rattle of the wheels, and the man lashed his horse into a gallop.

There was no shadow of a doubt that treachery of some kind was intended. The forebodings of evil that had haunted her throughout the day now flashed across her terrified senses, and she felt she was on the brink of some dire misfortune.

"If you don't stop I'll throw myself out."

A cut of the whip on the horse's flanks was the only answer she received, and the cab whirled faster than ever over the stones.

A short prayer filled her heart; it was not for herself, it was for those she loved ten thousand times more than herself, her husband and her father. Then the door was opened; there was a sharp scream, a dull thud against the kerb, and the cab went on without Clive.

"Curse the thing!" muttered the cabman, as he pulled up about fifty yards farther on and looked back. "I can't afford to wait. Here are some people coming down the street, they'll take care of her. This may do just as well as the other plan, better too, for it's safer. She can't get back for a few hours, and that will be time enough."

This time the words were neither wheezy nor ungrammatical.

The cab rattled on, and there on the hard stones of a back slum in the far East of London lay poor little Clive Dorrien, stunned and bleeding.

* * * * * *

"'We won't go 'ome till mornin', an' we won't go 'o-ome till mornin', an' we won't go 'o-ome till mor-orni-i-ing till—'"

"Hallo! 'ere's a woman drunk."

"Dishgrashful! Dhrunk an' 'cap'ble thish time 'night. Shad shpec'cle."

"Shut up, Swipey. 'Ere, let's get the poor thing out o' the way."

"All right, 'Arry. Come on, you chaps, lend a 'and. Never mind Swipey Brown; 'ark to 'Arry, what *'e* says."

In all emergencies, a leader, heaven-sent, and self-assertive, always springs up equal to the occasion. In plain English, there is always one person in a crowd who is not quite such a fool as the rest. The successful general is, after all, only he who makes less blunders than the beaten one.

"'Arry" was evidently the man here. His following consisted of about half-a-dozen young apprentices, shop-boys, and small clerks who had been having a bank-holiday, and had been "keepin' the pot a bilin'," as one of them, in graceful metaphor, had termed a prolongation of the day's festivities to this advanced hour.

"She ain't drunk," said Harry, as he stooped down. "She's only a bit knocked off her chump by this 'ere cut on the 'ead. She's a young lady by the looks of her, a regular top-sawyer too, and a real pretty one into the bargain, and no mistake. 'Owever did she come by this; and whatever brought her here?"

"There's been dark work 'ere," said a gloomy young apprentice, with folded arms and a firm conviction that tragedy, not gas-fitting, was his forte; "'Amlick," as he called the Danish Prince, his speciality.

"Oh! bother yer play-actin', Spotty." (This "'Amlick" in the East was afflicted with pimples.) "Bother yer play-actin'. Go and fill yer 'at with water from the pump. That's the only sort o' spoutin' will do her good," said Harry, who all this time, with the utmost tenderness, was untying a handkerchief round her neck, and smoothing back the golden hair, bedabbled with blood, from the white, rigid little face.

"It's all along o' the Gover'ment," said another young apprentice, who belonged to a political club, "that our citizens and citizenesses, pursuing their peaceful avocations in our streets, are thus——"

"Oh stow that 'ere," said Harry. "It's al'ays along o' the Guv'ment with you. If yer taters ain't all 'ot at yer dinner, it's the fault o' the Guv'ment. If yer young woman don't meet yer, and goes off with another chap, it's along o' the Guv'ment. Go on with yer. Yer won't be made Prime Minister for a bit, I dessay. Anyways, the country ain't in such a 'urry but what it can wait while you knock at that door. We must get her took in somewheres."

Here "Swipey Brown," catching something about knocking at a door, furiously assailed a hoarding against which he had been leaning, under the impression that he was seeking admission at some friendly portal.

"Drop that, Swipey!" said Harry; and, consigning his charge to another apprentice, he knocked at the nearest door.

A light flickered in a top window, then it feebly illuminated a window on the landing, then it finally lit up the pane over the door, and a voice said:

"What d'yer want?"

"Oh! if yer please," replied Harry, in his politest tones, "a lady 'ave met with a serious accident, and——"

Here "Swipey" spoiled the whole thing by a lurch up against the door, which nearly stove it in.

"Go on with yer," said the voice from within in furious accents, "a set o' drunken blackguards. Go on with yer!" and the voice and the candle retired the way they came.

No one who has not tried it can realise what a hard thing it is to obtain assistance from the denizens of a street in the dead of night, and when you labour under the additional disadvantage of being accompanied by an individual like "Swipey Brown," who brings discredit and distrust on you at the most critical moments, the task is almost hopeless.

On trying the next house, a window in an upper storey was thrown open, and a shrill voice threatened them with a "bucketful a top o' their 'eads," if they did not at once move on.

"But 'ere's a lady——"

"Go on with yer; 'ere's a bucket," was the trenchant and unanswerable rejoinder.

A few doors lower down they made another attempt.

In a short time the feeble twinkle of, apparently, a rushlight struggled through the glass over the door, and a quavering voice said:

"What would you be pleased to want?"

Here at all events, was civility—a decided step in the right direction.

"Oh!" said Harry, "would you kindly have the goodness to——"

A caterwaul from Swipey here aroused the virtuous indignation of his companions, and there were cries of "Shut up, Swipey."—"You ought to be foreshamed of yerself."—"It ain't a English way o' goin' on."—"One 'ud think you was a wild Injun."

This last allusion was unfortunate. It bore bitter fruit.

"Kind gentlemen," said the quavering voice; "for such, from your tones, I judge you to be, I am only a poor, lone, lorn old widder, totally unworthy of your honourable notice, and I hope you'll leave me in peace."

"We are very sorry to disturb you," said Harry, "but a lady 'ave met with a terrible accident, and——"

Here the irrepressible Swipey Brown, on whom the epithet of "wild Injun" had just dawned in its true meaning, shrieked a North American war-cry through the key-hole, and the rushlight went out with a suddenness which favoured the supposition that the trembling holder, being probably deaf, had put her ear to the key-hole, and must have tumbled over backwards in her fright.

There was a silence amongst the party for some moments, a silence of indignation, during which the owner of the quavering voice was heard beating a rapid and disorganised retreat up the stairs. Then the storm burst on the devoted Swipey's head, the storm being in the shape of the exasperated Harry's fist. It was too much for Harry. He fell upon the wretched Swipey, and pommelled him until he blubbered.

"There, take 'im away," said Harry, breathless with his exertions. "We shan't do no good as long as he is with us."

"Away with 'im," said 'Amlick.

But Swipey Brown, than whom in sobriety a gentler creature never sanded sugar or gave short weight, now thirsted for 'Arry's blood, and it required the combined efforts of the stage-struck young gasfitter and the politician to restrain him.

"There'll be more dark work done afore the night's over, mark my words," said the former; "Swipey's monkey's up."

Luckily, however, on being unintentionally let go by his holders, "Swipey's monkey" went down again with the rapidity of a barometer in a cyclone. In the middle of a fearful threat he suddenly, on unexpectedly finding himself quite at liberty to carry it into execution, passed into a peaceful maudlin stage; and after murmuring that he loved 'Arry rather better than his own father and mother put together, he sat down on a door-step, and wept bitterly over certain wrongs of his childhood, "but for which," he contended, he "should 'ave growed up a better man."

"Aha!" said 'Amlick; "there might 'a been dark work done, 'oo knows, in Swipey's childhood?"

He seemed determined to have dark work done somewhere—perhaps as an agreeable contrast to his every-day vocation of gasfitting, which, if properly conducted, is the last thing to be termed a work of darkness.

With the exception of Mr. Swipey Brown, who was certainly drunk enough for all, none of the party had overstepped the bounds of sobriety to any serious extent. There was just enough liquor in each to bring out his characteristic peculiarity in bolder relief than usual—that was all.

Harry was more energetic and commanding, the gloomy, stage-struck hero more gloomy and stagey, and the Red Republican a few shades deeper in his opinions, than they would each have been had total abstinence been the order of the day and night.

All this time Clive continued insensible.

"'Ere, give us another coat to put under 'er 'ead. Mine ain't high enough by itself," said Harry.

They had all of them their "Sunday best" on, but every coat was whipped off in a moment and proffered to Harry. The "sweet things" in the "Slap-up," the "Down-the-Road," and the "O. K." styles were then folded up, and on this magnificent pile of fashion, slightly impregnated with the fumes of British-grown tobacco, Clive's small head was pillowed.

"There, now, she'll rest more comfortable till we get 'er took in somewheres. What a lot o' savidges they are, to be sure, about 'ere!" said Harry. "We'll try this house."

"Is Mr. Stickerby within, may I ask?" he said, as a female, in response to his knock, had asked him his business through the closed door.

He had seen the name over the little shop, and had thought it rather a good way of, at all events, securing a patient hearing. Unluckily, however, Mr. Stickerby had been dead some years, and his widow, the lady who addressed Harry through the keyhole, reigned in his stead. Naturally she looked upon the question merely as a *ruse* of some midnight marauders to ascertain if she were alone, previously to sacking the premises; and with great ingenuity framed her reply accordingly.

"Ay, that he is, and got his two nephews and three brothers a-staying in the 'ouse with 'im, and there's also *my* two nephews and a son-in-law a-sleepin' in the two-pair back; leastways, they ain't sleepin', I should say, but wide awake a-listenin' to every word I'm a-tellin' yer off. Don't yer come down, Stickerby my dear, and tell John there ain't no call just *yet* to let off the blunderbust what's loaded to the brim as full of bullets as ever it can 'old."

And here Mrs. Stickerby, with great volubility and wonderful presence of mind, continued to give directions to numerous imaginary male relatives of the blood-thirstiest description.

"But really there ain't no occasion for all this 'ere; if you'll only open the door——"

"Oh yes, I dessay, young man. I say, Stickerby, my dear, tell my nephew Fred—what belongs to a Rifle Corpse and gained a prize for shootin' a cow at the first fire, and has got his rifle along with 'im, which I 'ears 'im a-loading of it now—to mind the opposite winders when he takes aim."

It was hopeless trying to reassure Mrs. Stickerby.

That "Is Mr. Stickerby within?" when Mr. Stickerby had gone to his long home some years previously, had been fatal, and the more Harry tried to reason with Mrs. Stickerby the more she regarded him in the light of a wolf in sheep's clothing.

The next attempt was met with an allusion to the "kitching biler as was brimmin' over with scaldin' 'ot water."

"What's up?" now cried a voice from an opposite house.

"A poor young lady met with an accident, and we can't get no one to take her in till she comes to, and we can hear where she lives," replied Harry. "It 'ud be a real charity, sir, if you was to open yer door to 'er."

"Wait a bit," said the voice, and the head disappeared from the window.

They "waited a bit," and in due time the door was opened and the man came out.

"Dear me, dear me, this *does* look a sad piece o' business. Lor' bless me, she ain't more'n seventeen about, and a high-born lady too, by the looks of her. Bring her in, bring her in."

In a few moments Clive was laid on a sofa in a tiny little sitting-room at the back of a small shop.

"Now, what do you know about it? Here, Sophy, come down, my dear."

"There's been some dark——" and "the Guv'ment

ought ter——" began 'Amlick and the politician simultaneously; but their observations were nipped in the bud by Harry, who very properly took upon himself the responsibility of replying:

"We knows no more about it than you do. We found her lyin' in the street just near where you saw her, and we've been tryin' to get her took in somewheres for the last 'arf 'our."

Here the man's wife, a nice-looking young woman of about eight-and-twenty, entered, and at once, without noticing the strangers, rushed to her sister in distress.

"Poor darling! Oh Fred, did you ever see such a sweet, innocent little face? she doesn't look much more than a child. Poor, poor darling!" and the woman's tears fell fast, as she kissed the white forehead, and fondled the cold, powerless little hand.

Harry felt that his late charge was in kind hands, and he and his friends took their departure.

"Bless me, if she hasn't got a wedding-ring on her finger! Oh Fred, surely no man could be such a brute as to ill-treat a little darling like this?"

"Do you think, my dear," said the man, "we'd ought to feel in her pocket to see if she has a purse, or a pocket-book, or a letter, or anything that might tell us who she is, so that we might communicate with her friends?"

"Wait a bit, Fred, she might have come by this for love of somebody she may wish to shield, I mean her husband, Fred; he may have been guilty of some brutality; and, though I'm sure we wouldn't tell the poor darling's secrets for untold gold, it might be a consolation to her, when she comes round, to hear that we haven't been prying and trying to find out all about her. At all events, wait a bit, Fred."

"All right, Sophy, you know best. I'll go round and get Flimson to have a look at her."

Flimson was the chemist, a few doors down, and while

her husband went for him, the woman dressed the cut on the side of the forehead with tender and loving hands.

Flimson, as soon as he arrived, administered some restorative, and Clive partially revived. But for hours she remained in a kind of dreamy stupor, and it was not until fully nine o'clock in the morning that she recovered her senses sufficiently to recollect what had happened the previous night, or to understand where she was.

The woman and her husband now wanted her to let them send for her relations, while she remained quietly where she was, but Clive would not hear of such a thing. To get back home, to feel herself once more safe there, filled her with a feverish longing, and reluctantly the worthy couple allowed her to depart. They would not hear of any remuneration, but Clive managed unseen to slip some gold into a child's money-box she saw, and which she rightly conjectured belonged to a little daughter the woman told her she had at school.

"Good-bye," said Clive; "from the bottom of my heart I thank you for all your kindness."

She shook hands with the man, and kissed the woman.

The latter hugged her, and called her "a sweet darling, and no offence meant."

"Fred," she said, as she watched the receding cab with glistening eyes, "I can't help thinking of that verse in the Scriptures about entertaining angels unawares."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### EXPULSION.

"HAS your master returned?" were the first words Clive anxiously spoke, as the door of her own home was opened to her once more.

"Yes, ma'am, he came back about half an hour ago, and——"

"Thank God!" thought Clive, as she rushed past the servant, who seemed to be full of some strange and dire intelligence. "Oh! how I long to feel safe in his arms after all I've gone through!"

"Stud, Stud! Oh darling, I'm so glad you've come back! I've such a lot to tell you," she cried, as she rushed with open arms into the room where she found him pacing up and down.

He put out his hand to keep her off, and turned on her a face as white and cold as marble, a face which froze the blood in her veins.

"Stud!" she shrieked, "what is it? Oh! my own darling, tell me why you look like that? Stud, my own darling Stud——"

"Silence," he said, "none of that vile mockery. It turns me sick." And he held her away as she struggled to throw her arms round him.

"Is he dead? Did I kill him, after all, that you've come back to me? I nearly did it at the time, and would have done it there and then, but for the crowd. They saved him."

An angry flush swept over the marble-like face, and the veins and muscles on the right hand stood out as he clenched it, at the bare recollection of the recent occasion he alluded to.

While he spoke, she stood transfixed and utterly dazed.

"Come," he continued in icy tones, "what is this interview for? I confess it surprises me, though I had thought this morning that nothing in this world would ever surprise me again. Let it be short, and—above all, let it be the last."

Her senses were reeling under the shock, and with difficulty she gasped out:

"Stud, your words fall with no meaning on my ears. Of what do you accuse me? Oh Stud, of what do you think me guilty?"

"Save yourself all this show of innocence; it does no good. It is only adding insult to the deepest injury a woman can do a man. It is making—if that is possible—your black falsehood and treachery blacker still."

"Do you a wrong? Be false to you? Oh Stud! Be untrue to you—to you, for whom I'd lay down my life at this moment! Oh Stud! if anyone has been poisoning your mind, how can you believe it? Look into my face. Oh! don't turn away as if I were some loathsome creature. Can you see in it anything but love—pure, absorbing, true love for you? a love which makes the bare idea of an untrue thought seem a sheer impossibility."

He glanced down for a moment at the upturned, agonised face, on which purity and truth, as well as anguish, were stamped.

"Great God! to think that such foul hypocrisy can fall from lips like these; that a heart so black with falsehood

and deceit beats in this form ; that eyes, whose every look is a lie, can gaze so truthfully ; that this face, like a child's in its innocence, is the face of a ——. I tell you I saw you, and you must know I did. I saw you as I see you now—— No, not as I see you now, with sham tears of innocence, but smiling on that loathsome blackguard, as not twelve hours before you had smiled on me. I saw you clinging to him, as you would cling to me now if I would let you, as he came forward to meet me. Silence then, I tell you, with all these protestations of innocence. They only plunge your soul deeper in falsehood, without attaining in the least degree the object for which lies are generally told, that of deceiving. I saw you with my own eyes ! "

" Oh God ! " said Clive, twisting her hands in her hair, and throwing herself on her knees, " have mercy on me, I believe I'm going mad. It may be the blow on my head, Stud," she pleaded in soft, trembling tones, and with outstretched arms. " Your poor little wife, you have always been so loving and kind to, has been stunned. Look, darling, my head is all cut, and I may be still wandering. And perhaps, Stud, all this time that I'm fancying your eyes are fixed on me with loathing and contempt, they are really full of love and tenderness, as I've always known them ; and that your arm, which I fancy is keeping me back from you, is in reality holding me down with gentle, kind force, as I struggle in some delirious frenzy. Stud, Stud ! " she suddenly shrieked with wild vehemence, " awake me, Stud, awake me out of this mad dream, or I shall never awake again in my senses."

His heart was wrung to agony, but he did not move a muscle, and not a tone of his voice faltered.

" If there could be one small speck of light in this dark, black episode of my life, it would be to think that you had been mad, and not accountable to God or man for your actions. But I cannot think so."

She had now sunk down on the floor at his feet, with her

head buried between her hands, and she trembled all over like one in a palsy.

"The whole world," he went on with the same intensified calmness, "might have tried to blacken your character, and I should not have believed it. Slanderous tongues might have wagged till they dropped, and they would never have poisoned my ear. I could not think any ill of you. On the very anniversary of that unfortunate day when you became my wife, I received an anonymous letter which might have tortured many a man with doubts; but not a shadow of one did it throw over my mind. At my uncle's yesterday evening I received another letter from the same writer. It warned me of your intention, and explained to me that the story about Lord Todmorden's illness was merely a trap to get me out of the way, and it also told me the exact time and place where I could intercept you and your——well, paramour, I believe, is the word. I laughed the idea to scorn, though there were these corroborations of the writer's statements, that I found my uncle as well as he ever was in his life, and that the telegram was evidently a forgery. But I was ready with a defence for you. I at once ascribed the letter and the forged telegram to one and the same person, actuated by some vile spite against me; and, not being required down there, I actually, trusting fool that I was, returned by a special train in order that I might get back to you as soon as possible. I arrived here at about two o'clock in the morning and found you gone. Then, for the first time, my anonymous correspondent's words began to sink home."

That moment when the first doubt had crept in had been perhaps the sharpest of any, and as he alluded to it his white face seemed to get whiter still.

She never offered a remark, but still sat on the floor, trembling and moaning, with her head bowed down between her hands.

"At all events, I determined to go to the place where he

said I should detect you, and I arrived just in time to see you driving off. You know the rest. How at the first moment when he caught sight of me, he saw my intention, and sprang out to meet me! and how you clung to him to prevent him from doing so; and how you screamed as I nearly choked the false life out of him. Pah!"

He shrugged his shoulders with a motion of disgust.

She lifted up her head and spoke in a dreamy way.

"Stud, I don't understand what you've been saying all this time. My head feels so queer, Stud. Haven't you a kind word for your little wife? I jumped out, darling, that's how it was done; you can see it's all cut. I jumped out, and the last thing I did was to say a prayer for you, darling, and for darling old Daddles."

"Don't let that name pass your lips. Poor old man! My heart bleeds for him. It will be his death."

"What do you say, Stud?" she said, as she tottered wildly to her feet and pushed back the hair from her brows. "I seem to have been dreaming for the last few moments; but it all comes back to me now. Oh Stud, Stud, I am your own, own wife! Let me come to you!"

Again she struggled to throw her arms round him, but suddenly she started back.

"Stud, what's the matter with your left arm? It hangs down loose and powerless."

"It may be some consolation to you to know that he broke it," he said, bitterly.

"Oh! my own precious darling!" burst from Clive in frantic grief.

"He broke it," went on Dorrien, as if he were talking of a walking-stick, "at the very first blow he aimed at me with that loaded bludgeon he carried. But my right arm was enough for him. For once right and might went together. I shall go to a surgeon's and have it set at once."

Clive wrung her hands in agony.

"He's hurt; he's in pain; and I, *I* his own wife can't go near him."

"This interview is profitless and painful. It must end now. It has already been prolonged beyond endurance. I have paid off all the servants a month in advance, and all but one have already gone. The house will then be in the hands of an agent to whom I have already given directions. It will be closed up just as it is, and taken care of until your father's wishes as to its disposal can be ascertained——"

"Spare him, Stud, spare him, for the love of God."

"You should have spared him yourself——"

"Oh Stud, don't kill him with the foul lies which have turned your brain and mind. Wait, I implore, until you recover your senses and see how cruel and unjust you have been."

"I have nothing more to add," he said, interrupting her coldly, "except that your money will be paid to you wherever you may be. I do not inquire into your future actions. I have done with you for ever. I shall not condemn myself to the miserable task of trying to win you back to the right path and to keep you in it."

She had now again sunk down on the floor with her head buried between her hands.

"That," he continued, "would be a labour of Sisyphus for which I am not a sufficiently infatuated fool. *Ce n'est que le premier pas qui coûte*; and if, with less temptation than mortal woman ever had, you have been capable of taking this first vile step, as certain as you are at my feet at the present moment, as certain as night is black, as certain as lead sinks, you will be incapable of arresting yourself in that very easy descent down which you have started. If you could not be true for the sake of the man who loved you with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his strength —loved you with a love which we are told should belong to the God who made us, and Him only—is it likely you will be true for the sake of the man who loathes you?"

A shiver ran through her frame as if she had been some poor wretch quivering under the lash.

"Hatred of you there is none in my heart. You do not rise to that point."

"Stud," she moaned, "is there no pity in it?"

"Yes, there is this pity, that I will not give you any false hopes, and that I will deal summarily with you. That is why I take the trouble to enter into explanations. I wish to impress upon you, once and for ever, the hopelessness of any attempt to regain your former position which convenience or dread of the world's opinion may prompt you to make. In the lasting penitence of a woman who goes wrong under great temptation, I have little confidence; but in the penitence of a woman who goes wrong in cold blood and under a cloak of the foulest hypocrisy, I have no confidence at all. When youth and good looks are no longer hers, and she finds herself a drug in that foul market where she has bartered her honour, a kind of negative virtue may come to her, but not until then will even this doubtful quality spring up. I might as well try to cleanse the Thames of its filth, and to force back its current with these hands, as to try and cleanse your heart of its pollution and keep you from floating downwards on the current of those muddy waters in which you have chosen to plunge. That labour of mad folly I decline. And now, for the last time, I tell you, I have done with you for ever."

He moved towards the door.

With a wild scream she threw herself at his feet, and clasped him by the knees.

"Stud, you can't leave me. You shan't. Before God I swear I am your own true, loving, faithful wife."

He moved on, but she still clung to him, shrieking for pity and protesting her innocence.

He broke from her, not roughly but with a quiet force, and the door closed on him.

She made an effort to follow, but her strength failed her, and moaning out for the last time,

"Before God your own true wife, Stud," she sank down in a swoon.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### "I TOLD YOU SO!"

WHEN Clive recovered her consciousness, about a quarter of an hour later, she found herself attended by the only servant left, a comparatively new hand, who explained that an agent and his assistants were already in the house, taking an inventory of the contents before handing over the charge of the premises to a policeman and his wife.

These details sounded bitter indeed, but it was impossible to add to the bitterness which already filled her heart to bursting, and she received them without a word.

"Wait, ma'am, don't ever go out like that," said the girl, as Clive rose from the sofa where she had been placed, and rushed to the door with her hair streaming down her back.

"Oh, never mind, thank you."

"Oh yes, ma'am, but do wait a bit." And the girl, taking advantage of a few moments of clouded reason which every now and again seemed to pass ever Clive and render her incapable of thought or action, twisted the hair into a thick golden strand and rolled it up into a knot behind.

The next minute Clive was tearing wildly through the streets, muttering to herself, "Yes, I'll go to her. She is my own flesh and blood, his own sister; she won't, she can't turn me away."

The distance was not great, and her hurried steps, vainly trying to keep pace with the tumultuous thoughts which were whirling in her brain, soon brought her to Miss Belmont's door.

Rushing past the astonished servant, who afterwards said she thought she had opened the door to a ghost, Clive ran up the steps and burst into Miss Belmont's sitting-room.

How different her entrance now to what her exit from it had been when she had last passed that door some months previously! Then she had marched out defiant, and with a flourish of trumpets, after having delivered that Scythian shot about "old cats." Now she came a suppliant imploring for help and pity.

Miss Belmont, who, with the aspen-leaf-like Alphonso on her knee, was taking her after-breakfast dose of the *Times*, on seeing who her visitor was, stiffened herself up on her seat and bristled with animosity. Alphonso, too, on seeing that it was Crib's mistress without Crib, tried to bristle up also, but his shattered nerves were hardly equal to the effort.

"I thought I told you the last time you were here—— gracious!"

Clive's arms were round her; Clive's white face was pressed to hers.

"Oh! forgive me for that. Don't think of those hasty, foolish words. Aunt, aunt, you'll take me in, you'll receive me, won't you? I have no one but you to go to?"

"Are you mad?" said Miss Belmont, extricating herself from the embrace and rising to her feet. "Are you out of your senses, if you ever had any?"

"If I'm not now, I soon shall be; I think I've had enough to make me mad. Oh aunt, he has driven me from him! He has sent me away."

"Your husband?"

"Yes, yes, my own darling husband, for he is still and will be, as he always has been. He doesn't know what he

has done. He believes it all. But you won't, aunt, you'll keep me here until it's all explained away?"

"Explained what away? Of what does he accuse you? Why has he driven you from his home?" asked Miss Belmont in hard accents.

"He says——and, oh! how bitterly and cruelly he deceives himself. He actually accuses me——oh! aunt, it's so awful, I can hardly bring myself to say the words. He accuses me of being unfaithful to him, of running away with someone else, and he has turned me away from him with loathing and contempt."

"I always said she would end badly. I always told George so, and he laughed at me," said Miss Belmont incisively.

Assuredly Miss Belmont is not my favourite character in this book, but in justice I must add that she was not, in the gusto with which she pronounced the above words, quite as great a brute as she appears. If you have always been warning a person, who laughs you to scorn, against a certain catastrophe, and that catastrophe does at last happen, you may feel sincerely sorry, but still there will be just a little inward satisfaction which will probably vent itself in the words, "I told you so."

If you have been in the habit of telling a dear friend time after time that if he persisted in driving that confirmed bolter of his, he would some day come to grief; and if after returning your warnings with epithets of "molly-coddle," "old funk," "croaker," etc., he were to be brought home some day with his head broken and his trap smashed, you might pity him from the bottom of your heart, but still *at* the bottom of your heart there would be a little sediment of gratified vanity that you, the "molly-coddle," the "old funk," etc., had now proved that you were the one with the sounder head in every sense; and though you would know that you were not exactly pouring balm into the wound, I doubt whether you could refrain from saying, "I told you so."

Though Cassandra was just as patriotic as any of her countrymen or countrywomen, I imagine that she must have been the least miserable of all Trojans when Troy fell, for to her alone was left the satisfaction of being able to say to everyone she met, "I told you so," and I have no doubt she fully availed herself of the privilege.

Thus, as Miss Belmont planted one foot down on the hearthrug and said, "I always told George so," there was a certain amount of self-applause in her cold heart.

"But, aunt, you don't believe it? you surely——"

Miss Belmont interrupted her with chilling *hauteur*, and withdrew the hem of her dress from contact with Clive's garments.

"You say your husband has turned you away from him for infidelity; you admit this. Now, I well know he possesses a cool head and a sound judgment. The one great folly of his life was his marriage with you, and I confess it astounded me. But he is now atoning for that. He is of all men I ever met the least likely one to rush to conclusions, or to adopt extreme measures without substantial foundations for doing so; and I feel assured that the proofs which have convinced him of your guilt would be all-sufficient for me. To your own denials and vehement protestations, I attach comparatively no weight whatever.

> "I ne'er heard yet
> That any of these bolder vices wanted
> Less impudence to gainsay what they did,
> Than to perform it first."

Had Clive been able to spout Shakspeare at a moment's notice, like her aunt, she might have refuted her on the spot by saying that Queen Hermione, to whom these words were addressed, turned out after all to be innocent and pure. But she knew nothing more of Shakspeare's works than what she had seen from a box at the theatre, or had heard read to her by her father, who most certainly did not select such

passages; and all she did was to look at her aunt with wonder and reproach in her heart-broken face.

"I see," she said at last, bitterly, "that never shall I find pity, never shall I obtain belief in my innocence until I am once again with my own darling father. Oh!" said this poor, bruised little reed, as she turned her tearful eyes upwards; "oh, if I could only feel his arm round me now, only hear his dear voice saying, 'Look me in the face, Clive, and tell me you're innocent;' and I could, I could!" she suddenly shrieked, with a vehemence which made even Miss Belmont's cold heart move about one beat quicker, "I could gaze back again into his darling old face, and swear to him that I was as pure as when I used to sit on his knee, an innocent little child. And he would believe me. I know what he would do. He would clasp me fondly to him, and he would say that the whole world might go against me, but that I should still be his own truthful child. But I shall go to him. I shall go, even if I have to walk the whole way——"

"You betray a lamentable ignorance of geography," said Miss Belmont in cold, heartless tones.

"Can this be his own flesh and blood?" said Clive, with a motion of her hand towards her aunt, and allowing the unfeeling observation to pass unnoticed. "Can they have had the same mother? Can they——"

"Come, come," said Miss Belmont fiercely, "this is rather too much of a good thing. It is not my wish, any more than it is my intention, to receive lessons of virtue from *you*. The less you say about your father the better. Had he listened to my warnings—had he bestowed some pains and exercised some self-denial in checking those tendencies to frivolity and vanity, which I foresaw would, like rank, luxurious weeds, choke everything that was good in you and lead to ruin, and which I repeatedly brought to his notice—he would not now, poor, doting old fool——"

Clive's eyes flashed.

"Not a word against him!" she cried passionately. "I have not, I swear before God, betrayed his trust or his kindness. How dare you assail him with abuse? The aspersions you, his sister, have thrown upon him, I, his daughter, cast back in your false teeth."

Never for one moment did Clive mean to descend to a low personality. She merely used the expression "false teeth" as she would have said "false heart" or "false tongue," and perhaps in her indignation had mixed up one or two phrases together. But to Miss Belmont the accidentally discharged shaft had all the deadly poison of a disagreeable home truth. "False heart," or "false tongue," would have been comparatively harmless, for in her own self-imagined virtue she would have acquitted herself of either charge. But "false teeth" was an accusation founded on fact, therefore all the more exasperating. It was all she could do to restrain herself from laying hands on Clive, and expelling her by main force.

"Leave the house at once!" she cried. "Even in the degraded position to which you have sunk yourself, it is impossible for you to restrain your impertinent tongue. I cannot see how, if your own husband casts you off, you can expect more from other people. You have brought disgrace on an ancient and hitherto honourable family, and on my brother's gray hairs. Go!"

"May God forgive you, Aunt Macnamara," said Clive solemnly, as she walked out of the room.

"False teeth indeed! Infuriated minx! Let her go. She cannot bring more disgrace on the family; she cannot cut my brother more deeply to the heart than she has done already. Let her go, I leave her to her own devices. And now to write to George!"

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### HOMELESS.

On leaving her aunt's inhospitable door, instinct rather than reason guided Clive's footsteps to her old home; for now reason only flickered feebly in the poor overwrought brain. It was strange it had not fled altogether, for mental agony and physical injury had both combined against it. And now again she stood before her once bright, joyous home, an outcast from it.

The house was all closed up already, with the exception of the windows on the basement, from one of which the wife of the policeman in charge now looked at her with the eye of a stranger. Studholme Dorrien had certainly struck sharp and struck heavy.

"Stud, Stud," moaned Clive as she grasped the railings for a moment, like a drunken woman steadying herself, and then she fled from the spot! The sight was more than she could bear.

A gaunt spectre in black seemed now to be flitting before her and beckoning her onward. With tottering steps and starting eyeballs she followed it down one street and up another, until it stopped at a station of the District Railway. Then it turned its glittering eyes and its grinning

teeth on her, and held her trembling and fascinated in its gaze.

A shriek from an engine, and a train, amidst smoke and roar, emerged from the tunnel close by. The spectre pointed with one hand down to the rails, and with the other beckoned hastily, as if saying, "Now, now, quick, quick!"

"I come, I come," answered Clive in the spirit.

The hot breath of the engine scorched her cheeks as it passed; there was a vibration which shook the earth; a whirling of dust and particles in the air, a shriek from the monster of iron and steam as it disappeared into the next tunnel, and Clive, trembling from head to foot, was on her knees begging for forgiveness. The spectre had vanished, and in its place stood the bright figure of Hope pointing upwards.

"Temporary insanity" would have been the name given to the spectre by certain of Clive's countrymen in a subsequent formality, had its beckonings been attended to. Its other name was "Suicide."

A few minutes more of hurried action and semi-unconsciousness brought her once more in front of her old home. Reality and imagination were becoming so mixed up in her brain that she could hardly distinguish one from the other. A shrill barking and a wild leaping about her recalled her to herself. It was Crib, the brave but low-born cur, Crib, shrieking out his delight at having found his little mistress. He had been taken away by the departing servants, but had made his escape, and had been hanging about the premises whining and dejectedly looking for her. It was the first living thing associated with her past happiness which had met her with trust and affection, and the incident loosed the flood-gates of her tears.

"Come then, Crib, with me. At all events I shall have *you* for a friend."

A settled purpose now filled her mind, and that was to start as soon as she could for India to join her father. It

was a wild, mad-born project, for she never took into account such things as passage-money, luggage, etc., but still it was an improvement on the chaos of despair. Though it would never lead to any result, it was a guiding star in what had been for the last hour the pitchy black sky, and it at all events saved her from the giant spectre, of which she now thought with a cold shudder.

She had sense enough left in her throbbing brain to know that she could not start for a day or two, and it suddenly occurred to her that she would try and find shelter with the man and his wife, the good Samaritans of that morning.

*That* morning ! It seemed like a year back.

She got into a cab with Crib, and told the man to drive somewhere beyond Euston Station, and that she would then get out.

As she sat jolting over the stones, another cry over Crib seemed to relieve her brain a little, and then it dawned on her that the search for her humble friends was hopeless. She did not even know the name of the locality where they lived. In reality it was somewhere near Stratford-le-Bow.

"Never mind," she thought, "all I want is to hide myself in some out-of-the-way quarter, and to be with people who know nothing of me for the few days I shall be with them."

In a quiet back street the cabman pulled up, and told her this was the place she wanted, "somewhere beyond Euston Square."

Clive got out and paid him.

"Thankee, miss, thankee; this 'ere's the identical spot yer want;" and he drove off rapidly, as if to escape that profusion of thanks for his services which to a generous mind is ever embarrassing.

Where was Mr. P. T. Barnum or some of his agents that he or they did not swoop down on that cabby and label him, "Curious phenomenon: a London cabman who

did not ask for more?" Where, at any rate, was Madame Tussaud, that she did not rise from the pavement to take his number and a cast of his countenance from life? Either he was entitled, above all already there, to a niche in that temple of fame in Baker Street, or else Clive had given him a sovereign instead of a shilling. I fear the latter was the case. If so, it was a pity, for there was a great deal of use in store for Clive's small stock of money.

The search for a lodging was commenced at once, but she knocked at door after door, traversed street after street, and still she had no place to lay her aching head.

At some houses they would not take her in without luggage; at some, without references; and at others they would not take her in with a dog.

"Never mind, Crib," said Clive, after having had about the sixth door slammed in her face on this last account, "I shan't desert you, even if we have to sleep on a door-step together."

"Brayvo," said Crib with his expressive head and still more expressive tail; "them's my sentiments."

In translating Crib's thoughts I am perforce ungrammatical, for after all he was a mongrel, and I'm convinced that if he could have spoken he would have been, though honest, fearfully low in his speech.

In these localities vice and virtue seemed to jostle each other cheek by jowl. At one house the woman said indignantly that she was "not in the 'abit o' takin' in young women by theirselves, pertickerly young women dressed up in fal-lals."

"Fal-lal" being with her a generic term for all finery from a sealskin jacket to an earring.

At the very next door a blear-eyed, liquor-soaked old hag said, "Oh yes, my dear, yer've come to the right shop, yer 'ave. We shan't arsk no questions and we shan't be told no lies. Yer face is yer fortin' as 'ull bring in the rent all right." And here she added an invitation to

come in and seal the compact at once "over a drop o' gin."

Clive did not understand the old Jezebel's true meaning, but she recoiled from her with instinctive horror, and fled away, leaving the old woman, who was three parts drunk, curtsying ironically on the doorstep and singing with some slight variations of words and tune:

> Yer face is my fortin', sir, she said,
> Sir, she said, sir, she said,
> Yer face is my fortin', si-ir, she said.

Clive's looks had evidently made an impression on her, but so terrified was she by the old hag that she did not apply at another house until she got into the next street. Here virtue was coldly suspicious, for vice here stalked abroad in fine clothes, and Clive was well dressed.

"Let's look at yer left 'and," said one woman.

Clive obeyed, and for the first time realised that she had no gloves on.

"Turn yer 'and around, let's see the inside. Ah! it's a weddin'-ring, sure enough. Some o' the artful 'ussies they turns their rings round inside, and makes believe they're married women. Where's yer 'usband?"

"Oh! never mind," replied Clive, to whom the question was a cruel stab; "I don't think these will suit. I am very sorry to have given you the trouble."

At the end of the street there were a few small shops, and she went into one, half baker's, half confectioner's, and bought a bun for Crib. She had tasted nothing since the day before, but all she asked for herself was a glass of water.

"We ain't got no water," snapped the woman behind the counter. "There's lemonade and ginger-beer there, tuppence a bottle."

"But I should prefer the water," said Clive, "and will willingly pay you for it."

"Oh, bother!" said the woman, who was ashamed to take money for a glass of water, and still did not like the trouble of getting it.

Here the baker, who had been making up his accounts at a desk in the corner, chid his wife for her churlishness, and said to Clive:

"I'll go and get you a glass o' water, miss; and don't you think o' payin' for it. If we can't give a cup o' water for the askin', we ain't fit to be called Christians, or live in a Christian land. There, miss, there you are, fresh from the pump," he said, as, after a few moments' absence, he returned with a brimming tumbler.

Clive was very thirsty, but she caught Crib looking wistfully at her as she was raising the glass to her lips, and she paused.

"What, you want some for the dog, eh?" said the baker, and in a moment a pannikin of water was set before Crib.

Clive thanked the baker very gratefully—a little kindness sinks deep in a broken spirit—and as she contrasted the baker with his wife, and with the coarse, insolent lodging-house women she had come across that day, she mentally remarked, "Really I begin to think that men have kinder hearts than women."

Passing a small butcher's shop soon after, she went in, thinking that perhaps they could tell her of some quiet, decent woman who let apartments.

The butcher advanced, rubicund and hand-rubbing, but when he found out that it was not a sirloin of beef or a leg of mutton that she wanted, he replied grumpily, "No, he didn't know of no lodgings," and, turning his back on her, vented his feelings with the chopper.

"Do you want lodgings?" said his wife, coming forward and speaking in a soft, kind tone. "Well, I'm afraid there's nothing about here that will suit you. There's all sorts of people in these parts, good and bad, and I should recom-

mend you to be very careful where you go. However, at No. 26, down that street opposite, I know Mrs. Crump to be a hard-working respectable woman, and she has had a lady, a perfect lady, lodging with her for years. At all events, I can answer for the respectability of the house. I should advise you to try there."

"I'm so much obliged to you," said Clive.

"It's nothing, I'm sure," said the woman with a kind smile, as she threw a scrap of meat to Crib, at which the butcher, her husband, grunted savagely.

"I should not have rushed to conclusions," thought Clive, "about men being kinder-hearted than women. It's just six of one and half-a-dozen of the other, I suppose," and in the midst of her keen sorrow she could not help wishing that the baker had married the butcher's wife.

Following the kind advice, she knocked at No. 26, down the opposite street, and Mrs. Crump herself opened the door.

"Well," said Mrs. Crump undecidedly, after Clive had explained her object, "I ain't been in the 'abit o' lettin' my rooms to ladies with no references, nor no luggage, nor nothink, an' the fack is, really I'd sooner not."

"But it's only for a few days," said Clive.

"Ah!" said Mrs. Crump, shaking her head, "gettin' a person in when they wants to come, and gettin' 'em out when they don't want to go, is two different things."

"But it *really* would be only for a few days. It is only while I make arrangements before going on a long journey."

"Poor dear," thought Mrs. Crump, who had a very feeling heart under a very dirty exterior, "she looks as if she *was* goin' a long journey, indeed, a journey, too, where there ain't no return tickets issued, as the poet says in the theayter; she looks terrible bad, she do."

"Will you?" said Clive, who had stood meekly submitting to Mrs. Crump's scrutiny, "I'm very tired."

"Dear me, dear me," thought Mrs. Crump, as she struggled between humanity and prudence; "there don't look anythink wrong about her. Run'd away from school is about the worst she's done, I should think."

Clive saw that Mrs. Crump was wavering, and she tried the *argumentum ad crumenam.*

"Of course, I'll pay the week in advance. How much is it, two pounds?" she asked, opening her purse and tendering a couple of sovereigns.

"Bless you, miss, no!" said honest Mrs. Crump; "it's only a matter of fifteen shillin's a week for the rooms. But that ain't what I was thinkin' of. You see I'm partickler 'oo I takes in, and my lady lodger she's partickler too, and—— Lor' a mussy! Mary Ann, Mary Ann! Miss Weevins! 'Elp!"

For some moments Mrs. Crump, with the background formed by the poky little passage and the poky little staircase, had been a gradually dissolving view to Clive's eyes, and she had at last settled the question whether she was to be taken in or not by falling insensible into Mrs. Crump's arms.

In response to the cries for assistance, Mary Ann, a slatternly servant from below, and Miss Weevins, the lady lodger from above, appeared on the scene with a promptitude which divulged that they had been listening on their respective landings; and between the three, Clive was carried into the dingy little sitting-room off the passage, Crib bringing up the rear, whining plaintively.

On a funereal-looking couch of black horsehair they laid Clive, and Mary Ann was forthwith despatched for a doctor; while Miss Weevins ran up the stairs to her room for eau-de-cologne and her water-bottle.

Miss Weevins was about thirty years of age, small of

stature, but big of heart. She might be compared to a penny river-boat with the engines of an ironclad. Her heart throbbed with lofty aspirations which shook her to pieces, and often drove her head under water.

"Dear me," moaned Mrs. Crump, "if she's took ill 'ere, what a terrible thing it will be! She's got the fever on her strong now, and it may be something 'fectious."

"Never mind, Mrs. Crump," said Miss Weevins, as she twittered and quivered about Clive. "I'll take all the responsibility. I never felt my sympathies so forcibly and instantly aroused. There must be a strange story attached to all this. Just look at this cut and bruise over the temple. Poor little head, it looks made to be patted and guarded from harm, instead of bruised and laid amongst strangers."

The doctor speedily arrived, and pronounced Clive to be suffering from brain fever. The disease, he said, had taken a firm hold on her, and he feared he was rather late in the field.

Miss Weevins had her conveyed up to her own room, which was healthier and larger than the one below, and had her placed in her own bed, which was more comfortable than the one downstairs. The doctor prescribed soothing draughts, which were duly administered by Miss Weevins, but

> Not poppy, nor mandragora,
> Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world,
> Could ever medicine her to that sweet sleep
> Which she owed yesterday.

All through the night Clive raved and wandered, and by her bedside, tearful and sympathising, sat the kind little soul.

Sometimes Miss Weevins clasped her hands together in terror, as the room resounded with Clive's shrieks to "Stud" for pity and belief in her innocence; and sometimes she buried her head in the counterpane and sobbed

as she listened to Clive, plaintively telling her wrongs to "darling old Daddles."

Miss Weevins could deduce nothing connected from these wanderings, but she heard enough to know that in this poor little waif which had so strangely come amongst them, and so deeply stirred her pity, was a pure spirit crushed and writhing under some cruel wrong.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### A FRIEND IN NEED.

For weeks, Clive lay trembling on the brink of the grave Sometimes all hope of saving her seemed gone, and even if he snatched her out of the jaws of death, the doctor feared that the injury to the brain would prove permanent. Her ravings were almost continuous, and even in the occasional intervals of quiet, reason failed to reassert itself. Constantly by the sick-bed, watching, praying, tending, and soothing or listening to the same sad wanderings over and over again, was the big-hearted little Miss Weevins.

After about three weeks, the doctor pronounced the fever to be on the decline, and held out strong hopes of ultimate recovery. At this Miss Weevins shed tears of joy, and offered up prayers of thanksgiving; for in those weeks of constant attendance she had learned to love deeply and tenderly the sick stranger.

One afternoon, as Miss Weevins sat by the bedside writing in a note-book, which she constantly carried about with her, she paused to take a look at the patient, who was lying very quietly, and found the great lustrous eyes, seeming out of all proportion in the pinched, wan little face, fixed steadfastly on her.

For a few moments Miss Weevins returned the gaze, uncertain whether there was reasoning speculation in the lustrous eyes or not, but gradually two great tears gathered in them and rolled down the thin cheeks. Then a skeleton of a little hand feebly protruded from the coverlet, and held itself out.

In an instant it was up to Miss Weevins' lips. Then, still holding it between her hands and stroking it tenderly, she leaned over and whispered :

"Don't exert yourself to try and talk. You've been ill, very ill for more than three weeks. But you will soon be well now, thank God ! Try and not trouble your mind about anything, there's a darling. You're amongst kind friends, and I feel as if I had known and loved you all my life."

The tears rolled faster, the lips quivered, and the wasted hand pressed Miss Weevins' feebly.

"There now, try and go to sleep for a little, you'll require such lots of rest," said Miss Weevins, as she smoothed the pillow and shed a few surreptitious tears behind it.

But Clive's eyes had no sleep in them now; they were full of a feverish longing for something.

"Your dog is all right. I'll just go and bring him in for a moment for you to see him," said Miss Weevins, trying with true delicacy of feeling to fathom the unspoken wishes.

In a very short time Crib made his appearance. He had sneaked into the sick room several times before, and had always whined sadly at the sight of his mistress. But now he seemed to know at once that there was recognition in her eyes, and with a sharp bark of delight he jumped on the bed. It was all Miss Weevins could do to restrain his transports, and he was just allowed to lick the thin hand for a second, and was then turned out to vent his joyful emotions in the back-yard.

"Now we really must be quiet," said Miss Weevins, in hopes that she had rightly interpreted the look in Clive's eyes, and that having now seen her faithful old friend in

health and spirits, she would settle down quietly to a refreshing sleep.

But the lustrous blue eyes were still filled with an unsatisfied yearning for something.

"What is it, I wonder?" thought Miss Weevins, with a dread that the delirium had returned.

Clive was unable to speak, and a beseeching look, which pierced Miss Weevins to the heart, was all the response in her power.

"What can it be?" said the kind-hearted nurse, as she went about the room touching different objects—a jug of lemonade, a cup for beef-tea, a fan which had often been waved for hours over the burning brow, etc. But to each of these Clive's eyes said "No."

Miss Weevins noticed the lips moving in futile efforts at speech, and she placed her ear close to them to try and catch the slightest sound.

"Paper, pen," came from the trembling lips in what appeared to be the mere echo of a whisper.

"But you can't write, dear; it's impossible."

A moan broke from Clive, as she turned another beseeching look which was irresistible. A pencil was soon placed in her hand, and paper under it. But the only result was a few illegible scratches. At this another moan escaped Clive, and again the eyes bespoke some intense anguish of the mind.

"Don't, don't worry yourself; keep quiet; there's a darling," said Miss Weevins. "You will soon be able to write, or at all events be able to whisper to me what you want written, if you will trust me that's to say; and the more quiet you are now the sooner the strength will come."

The strength was certainly a long time in returning to that wasted form. For days, Clive lay speechless with the same troubled upward gaze in her eyes, and with tears constantly chasing each other down her sunken cheeks. It was a heart-broken-looking little face, and after watching it Miss

Weevins would often be obliged to retire for a good cry behind the bed curtains.

That upward steadfast gaze carried to the brain none of those light trifles on which a mind, feebly rising from prostration and still too weak for more solid nurture, usually feeds. Unheeded by Clive, the flies danced their confused quadrilles and lancers close to the ceiling with all that furious *balancez* and *chassez* business whenever they met, usually so interesting to incipient convalescence. There were no faces, no animals, no maps of countries to be found in the pattern of the paper, in the cracks on the ceiling, in the shadows on the walls. There was no wandering away in the spirit to bright green fields, no anticipations, delicious and refreshing in themselves, of country air, waving trees, and bright sunshine. There was no listening to the sounds in the streets outside and weaving little stories out of them. There was no such pleasant loitering by the wayside, as Clive's mind toiled along the return road to strength. It was all one dull level of misery.

The fever and the delirium had passed, but the iron was still piercing her soul, and she was as sick at heart as ever. She tortured herself with wondering what had become of "Stud." She loved him as much, yearned for him as passionately as ever. She did not reproach him, for she believed that he believed in her guilt, and this belief of his could be born of madness only. She had thought that it must have been she herself who had been mad, but now she felt it was her "own darling Stud, so clever, so good," who had gone out of his senses. He had sworn he had seen her clinging to some man, and trying to save him from her own husband's wrath. Did she not know that this was a lie? and did she not know as well as she knew this that when Studholme Dorrien swore to a lie, he was no longer Studholme Dorrien in his right mind. To her, no intellect had ever seemed to tower so high, to be built on so firm a basis as this, and when once it was overthrown, she felt it

had fallen never to rise again. Death in the grave would have been better than this death in life. Then, too, there were torturing fears and anxieties concerning her father; and what she had so vainly tried to write with the first return to consciousness had been a few words to tell him of her innocence. And, gnawing thought! these words, for want of strength, were still unwritten. So the days and nights passed in almost unceasing torture of mind.

In spite, however, of the serious impediment to recovery offered by all this load of care, Clive's strength gradually returned, and the first use she made of it was to write a few impassioned words to her father, explaining that illness, from which she was just recovering, had alone prevented her from going out straight to him to comfort and be comforted, and begging him to make the best of his way to where she was lying in sickness and misery.

But where to address the letter was the question which puzzled the poor brain, already perplexed to the verge of distraction. By that time he might have left India. How fervently she prayed that he might have left it before receiving any letters from her aunt or her husband, and how she shuddered and turned sick as she thought of his receiving them without a line from her as an antidote to the poison! At last she decided on directing it to the regimental agents in London, who would be the best informed of his movements, with a request to forward it immediately. Getting this letter off her mind was a slight relief, but still there existed the torturing doubt whether it might not be too late.

To Miss Weevins was entrusted the duty of posting. All the way to the pillar-box the little woman held the envelope at arm's-length, as if it had been a centipede or a spider she was very much afraid of, and when it disappeared through the slit, and had gone from her gaze for ever, she felt greatly relieved.

"Dear me," soliloquised Miss Weevins, as she hastened homewards to the sick room, "I am so thankful that temp-

tation is out of my reach. What a fearful thing curiosity is in us women ! It nearly led me into what I should consider a most dishonourable action, that of betraying a trust reposed in me. She did not want me to know whom it was to, or she would have told me. It was to "darling old Daddles," I know that much, for she kept on saying those words as she cried and wrote, poor darling, and of course that is her pet name for her father. I must say I'm dying to know who he is, and it's my firm opinion that if I had looked at that envelope I should have found it addressed to 'The Right Honourable the Earl,' or 'The Most Noble the Marquis,' or 'His Grace the Duke of something or other.' What a fund of suggestions she has been to me for touching up my novel, to be sure !" Romance was Miss Weevins' besetting weakness.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### LATE FOR PARADE.

WHITER about the head, deeper furrowed in the face, less erect in figure than when the reader last saw him on the poop of the outward-bound transport, stands Colonel Belmont at the bamboo gate which leads into the compound of his bungalow at Sunderpore in Bengal. It is very early in the morning, but the colonel has had his tub, his cup of tea and slice of dry toast long ago. The home mail has arrived during the night, and he is anxiously awaiting the arrival of the *peon* with the regimental letters.

"This is the last one I shall receive from her," he thinks, not in a spirit of gloomy prophecy, but with a throb of pleasure, not usual in jaded hearts that have beaten for more than half a century. His leave has been granted, and before the next mail from England arrives there will be many a league less of land and sea between him and his little daughter.

At last the *peon* appears in the distance, an object of intense interest to many hundreds. By that lithe native's side is many a message of love, many a word of hope and comfort, from the far-off English homes, towards which many parched souls are yearning as the hart pants for the running brooks. It may not be generally known that scores

of young soldiers in distant lands die from sheer home sickness.

The rule of *seniores priores* evokes some little impatience as the *peon* passes the men's quarters, the officers' bungalows, the mess-house, and makes straight for the colonel. With a low salaam, he hands a thick bundle of letters to the *sahib*, who takes it and retires hastily into his bungalow. Those letters directed to him "On Her Majesty's Service," of which the bundle is mainly composed, the colonel puts on one side for a more convenient season. He knows that none of them will contain anything weightier than some such query as why one halfpenny has been charged for marking Private Johnson's boots fully two months before the period when, according to regulation, Private Johnson's new boots should have been served out to him; and the colonel may surely think his own flesh and blood of a little more consequence than Private Johnson's boots, without being considered a traitor to his country's trust. There is a belief amongst soldiers—I know not if it be founded on fact—that War Office clerks receive a reward of one half-crown for each hole they pick, each hair they split; and that to this system is due their overweening passion for mares'-nesting. The colonel seems to share this belief, and calls them "the confounded mosquitoes of a military existence," as he tosses the numerous queries on one side to be demolished one by one in due season.

"A letter from Macnamara! I wonder what she can have to say? Nothing pleasant, I'll be bound. *Timeo Danaos, et dona ferentes*," says the colonel with a mixture of astonishment and dread, as he catches sight of an envelope addressed in his sister's precise handwriting; "and one from Studholme; and" (his hand trembles and his eyes glisten) "one from Clive—my precious little Clive!"

On the principle of taking the nasty dose first and the nice sweet afterwards, he tears open his sister's letter, meaning just to skim through it and get it off his mind before

settling down to the perusal of the other two. "Vinegar and nectar," thinks the colonel. But, after all, the nectar is too tempting, and the vinegar is reserved. "It won't get any more sour for keeping, I'm sure," he thinks. He then reads Clive's letter, written on that eventful day when her mind was full of dismal forebodings, and his eyes grow very dim over the loving words, written as they evidently have been under some painful strain of the mind. He longs more than ever to clasp her in his arms. "She does not write like herself," he thinks. "What's troubling my own little Clive?"

He then takes up his sister's letter. A ghastly pallor overspreads his face as he reads, his eyes seem starting from their sockets, and once or twice he clasps his forehead with his hand.

"Liar!" he thunders out, as he crumples the letter up and smites the table with his clenched fist. "Thank Heaven! she's not before me. I should forget my manhood, the ties of flesh and blood, my cloth, and strangle the life out of that foul throat. Lying devil! if ten thousand such lying tongues as yours, steeped in venom and spite, were to whisper this tale into my ear day and night, I should never believe them, though I lived to Doomsday. The whole world might join you in your hellish plot and swear her false—the whole world save one. Yes, there is one, but one person on this God's earth, whose word against her might make me doubt. But Studholme Dorrien will never say or write that word, for Studholme Dorrien will never tarnish his honour with a foul lie. I would stake my soul on it. Here in this letter I shall find your accursed lies refuted in every line."

As he thus mutters he tears open his son-in-law's letter, and reads. The pallor grows more death-like still, the sweat of agony bursts from his brow, a groan escapes his white lips, and his limbs tremble as if palsied; but still he reads on word after word, though each one is like a stab to

his heart, until he comes to the very end. Then a heart-broken cry goes up, a trembling hand is outstretched to Heaven for help, and he bows his white head on the table over his one arm.

* * * * * *

The morning parade has "fallen in" some time, and the officers' call has sounded, but the colonel is the only one who has not responded to it. The officers inspect their companies, while the band at the head of the column, in graceful allusion to the chief event of the morning, plays "Good news from home;" a pleasantry on the part of the band-sergeant, which is evidently relished in the ranks, to judge from the number of smirking faces. To some, however, the tune is a bitter mockery. Still the colonel is not in his accustomed place. The officers finish their inspection, the band stops playing, the companies are "equalised," the adjutant collects reports, and Colonel Belmont is still absent.

The men are standing "at ease," and many are the remarks exchanged in the ranks concerning this strange want of punctuality on the part of "old Rough-an'-tough." The barrack-clock might go on too quick, the station-gun might go off too slow, but "old Rough-an'-tough" has never betrayed any such weaknesses.

Looks are constantly directed to the bungalow in front of which his charger is being led by a native groom. But the minutes speed on, and still the colonel tarries.

The senior major is on the point of sending an orderly to ask if he shall go on with the parade, when the colonel emerges from his bungalow and mounts his charger. At the best of times he is not good at getting into the saddle, owing to the loss of his right arm, and this morning he bungles sadly over the performance. But once in his seat he seems firmly fixed there, and manages his Arab with ease and skill.

The parade is called to attention, the senior major

draws his sword, salutes, and reports, "All present, sir," as the colonel canters up on the flank of the regiment.

Though second to none in point of discipline is the corps, there are few "eyes front" in it. Numerous are the furtive glances cast to see what the extraordinary spectacle of "old Rough-an'-tough," late for parade, looks like. The general conclusion is that he has been seized with some sudden illness which has delayed him, for as much of his countenance as can be seen under his helmet is haggard and ghastly.

"He is all there, though," is the general verdict, as his word of command rings out in a tone which makes the men "jump to it."

"Square on the leading company!" is the order.

The square is formed, the colonel and the other mounted officers inside it.

"Inwards turn!" is the next order, and in one moment about five hundred cropped polls become the same number of staring faces. All eyes are fixed on the white, care-worn countenance. Every one is anxious to know what is coming. Under the very nose of the sergeant-major a man scratches his chin, and his name is not taken down!

"Officers, non-commissioned officers, and men," says the colonel; "you all knew that I was going to England shortly, on six months' or a year's leave. I have now to tell you that I shall start this very day, and that I shall not rejoin you. My soldiering is over. This is the last occasion on which I shall wear the uniform of the Queen, and I take this opportunity of wishing you all farewell, and thanking you from the bottom of my heart for the support and obedience you have always rendered me. Good-bye. God bless you all. Square—front!"

A rattle and a shuffle, and the staring faces suddenly turn once more into cropped polls.

Column is then reformed, and the colonel dismisses the parade.

Not with rough shouts of delight and elephantine gambols, as is their wont when released from drill, do the men rush off to the barrack-rooms or the canteen; but, with lagging steps and backward glances, they walk away in earnestly conversing groups.

"He was a tight hand, he was, but he was fair and aboveboard; and we'll have many a long march afore we sees the likes of him again," is, with sundry emphatic additions and variations, the summing up of the men on the momentous question. The officers, as the men move away, crowd round him, but he has time for no more than a few words, and hurries away to his bungalow to prepare for his journey. He wishes to speak to the senior major in private first, and after that he will be happy to see any of them while concluding his preparations. No one has asked him the why or the wherefore of his sudden departure. Colonel Belmont is the sort of man from whom people do not ask explanations; they wait until he volunteers them.

"Hetherington," he says to the major, as soon as they are by themselves, "you will get my step, and I am glad the regiment falls into such good hands. Now, do me a favour, old friend. I don't care for the price of my commission. A short time ago it would have gone from your pocket into mine, and now, as they are turning the army upside down, let it go from mine to yours. You have a large family, Hetherington, take it to please me."

"No, colonel, it is out of the question for me to accept such an unheard-of piece of generosity."

"It's of no use to me, Hetherington, and it is to you. Mrs. Hetherington, I know, would like to take the younger children home. Think of them and do as I ask you. There's little Teddie getting as white as a sheet, and Ethel and Bob don't run about as they used to. Take it, Hetherington, for their sakes."

Three little pasty faces, out of which colour and merriment have been gradually fading, rise before the major's

thoughts, and his eyes are dim as he says, "God bless you, Belmont, I give in."

A few more moments are occupied in another act of generosity. The colonel leaves with Hetherington, in the soundness of whose head and heart he places implicit trust, a large sum of money to be expended on the wives and children of the soldiers as their necessities may demand. "They have a hard time of it, Hetherington, make it easier for them with this. You need not say where it comes from. There's my sword—I should like you to have it, Hetherington. It's an old and tried friend. It saved me at Sobraon from being cut off at a very early stage of my career, and I have had no other since."

"No, no, colonel. Surely you will keep it as a memento of your service. I could not think of taking it, much as I should value it as a *souvenir* of one as true as its own steel."

"Take it, Hetherington, I wish you to. And now promise me that if ever you take the regiment into action you will use it. If ever during the few closing years of my life I hear of the regiment being actively employed, I should like to think that at all events my old sword was at its head waving my lads forward; and if, old friend, I read Bob Hetherington's name amongst the killed, I'll know my sword was held in the last grasp of a brave man, and, oh! Hetherington, how I will envy you!"

"I'll take it, colonel, and God grant I may wield it as gallantly as George Belmont has done."

They are silent for a few moments, as they stand face to face, hand in hand.

The colonel is the first to break the silence. "Hetherington, how I will envy you," he repeats, in a tone of intense sadness. "There, there, let us talk no more about the sword. There are my medals. I should like you to have them also. Keep them for my sake. Put them under a glass case in your drawing-room, stow them away at the

bottom of a bullock-trunk—anywhere. I have no longer any use for them."

The colonel's manner does not admit of a refusal, and Hetherington sadly accepts a handful of medals bearing the glorious names of Sobraon, Moodkee, Ferozeshah, Alma, Inkermann, Sevastopol, Indian Mutiny, and half-a-dozen others, the mere mention of which quickens the blood in a true Englishman's veins.

"Worldly honours," soliloquises the colonel as he is left alone, "I have done with. There is nothing here for me now but dishonour. Had I worshipped Thee, O God! as I worshipped this idol I raised up in my heart, I might not have needed this terrible chastening."

He bows his head meekly and his lips move in prayer.

"I shall go to her, wherever she may be. I shall travel day and night until I find her. Her husband—oh, Stud, my noble boy, you may forgive her, but you can never take her back to your arms. But her father can, he can do both. Clive! Clive!" he says, with outstretched arm and streaming eyes, "come to your old haven of rest. Come, my poor darling, to your old father until it pleases God to take you to Himself. I shall win her back."

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### "PIMPERNELL."

THAT his heroine should have at any moment of her existence a dirty face is a damaging confession for a novelist to make; and yet in candour I am bound to admit that often—generally in fact—during the first week or two of her convalescence, Clive's fever-pinched little face was hardly less smudgy than that of Mary Ann, Mrs. Crump's servant-girl. The process was simple. The scalding tears were constantly flowing, and she would sit for hours together in her chair drawn near the fireplace, pressing her burning, tear-blistered cheek against the stone mantelpiece; and as Mary Ann, in a spirit more creditable to an antiquary than a servant, scrupulously allowed that fixture to rest undisturbed in its hallowed dust of ages, Clive's tearful cheeks were considerably the worse for the contact. In this position she would sit from hour to hour in the silent motionlessness of despair, a passive prey to that intensity of grief which seems to numb the limbs as well as the senses. She was not strong enough yet to struggle against her sorrow, and all she could do was to sit and think, and to sit and think meant to sit and weep. Crib would squat on his haunches at her feet, looking intently up into her face and uttering low little whines at intervals. But she had not a word even for him.

He seemed to take this deeply to heart, and one day, as if unable to stand the deplorable state of things any longer in inaction, he sallied forth into the streets and was absent for several hours. He chased about a dozen cats, killed two, engaged in numerous combats with his own species, and finally fought a pitched battle *à l'outrance* with a bulldog. Then, bleeding and maimed, he crawled home, and, lying down at Clive's feet, gave her one last look, as much as to say, "I've done all I could think of for you," and gave up the ghost. He was buried in the back garden, and Miss Weevins and Mary Ann were the chief mourners. Miss Weevins cried hysterically, and Mary Ann shed a sooty tear over his grave. A four-footed friend can be a very dear one, and bitterly Clive felt his loss.

Miss Weevins would at first try by conversation and forced sprightliness to rouse the invalid, but she was a shy, retiring little creature, always fearful of being intrusive, and soon saw how unavailing all her efforts were. But as Clive grew a little stronger she began, out of gratitude, to assume an outward semblance of interest in Miss Weevins' conversation, and was really thankful for the society which was so timidly offered.

"I'm afraid you stay in a great deal on my account," said Clive one day, as Miss Weevins sat in front of her with the everlasting note-book in her lap.

"Oh no, you must not give me credit for doing that," replied Miss Weevins; "I hardly ever go out. Mine has always been a very uneventful existence, but I cannot say I do not mix in the world. I reach it through my pen. I write."

"Novels?" asked Clive.

"No; I cannot say I write novels. I have written *one*, or rather I'm writing one, for I am still engaged in touching it up; but I don't suppose it will ever be published, for I don't think I could ever have the courage. I have cried and laughed with the characters for years, and altogether I have

got to love and to believe in them so thoroughly that I should shrink from sending them out into the world, perhaps to be sneered at and ridiculed."

"And have you been very long writing it?"

"Oh years, years. I came to the end about three years ago, but ever since then I've been engaged in touching up."

"Three years!"

"Yes, quite that. You see the more you touch up the more there is to touch up, and so it goes on. I believe I shall go on touching up to the end of my days. I have never had so many brilliant ideas as during the last few weeks, and they have all been owing to you. You have, unconsciously, been an inexhaustible fund of suggestions to me, and I am now engaged in altering my heroine all through. She was of commanding stature, with black hair and dark flashing eyes before; but since I've seen you I can't abide her like that, and I am now making her exactly like you. But it was not to my novel I alluded when I spoke of reaching the world through my pen. I daresay now," continued Miss Weevins with a little pardonable pride, "you have read some of my effusions."

"You write for the papers, then, I suppose?" said Clive, who saw that the subject was a pleasing one to Miss Weevins.

"Well, I think I am justified in saying 'yes' to that. I contribute a good deal to a lady's paper."

And here Miss Weevins simpered and coughed and shook her head, then gave a funny little laugh, which all of it seemed to intimate: "It would ill become me to volunteer much on a subject redounding to my credit. But do pump me; I like it. It's delicious!"

"What paper? I should like to know very much, and I should always read whatever you wrote in it. I am sure it would always be something good and kind."

"Oh, I daresay you have often come across it. Per-

haps have taken it in regularly. Perhaps we have actually interchanged ideas in it. Who knows," said Miss Weevins in a sudden burst of enthusiasm, "that you may not be 'Christabel,' or 'May-flower,' or 'Dragon-fly,' or 'Chain-stitch,' or 'Blue Eyes'—yes, I shouldn't be at all astonished if you were 'Blue Eyes.' Are you, oh! are you 'Blue Eyes'?" asked Miss Weevins in that thrilling tone of anxiety generally adopted by the transpontine stage mother, when she asks the stalwart stranger if he has that strawberry mark under his left arm by which she will at once recognise him as "her long-lost chee-ild."

"No, I have never written under that or any other name. I have not the talent."

"Oh! don't say that," said Miss Weevins modestly. "We none of us know what we can do until we try."

"But you have not told me the name of the paper yet."

"'*The Workbox*; a Lady's Paper of Culture and Refinement.' That is its title in full. You know it, of course?"

"Yes, I've come across it sometimes."

"Now, as you read the articles in the columns devoted to Correspondence, did you ever wonder who wrote them?"

"Yes, sometimes; those and the mottoes in the crackers."

"Well," said Miss Weevins, a little crestfallen, "I don't think that the two should be classed together exactly, ahem!"

"Oh no, of course not," said Clive, who saw that in her forced attempt at small-talk she had made a mistake. "I only meant that the authorship in each case is alike buried in obscurity."

"Ah yes, I see what you meant. They are always written under some pseudonym. Do you recollect the name of 'Pimpernell' in *The Workbox*?"

"I think I do."

"Well, that's me, or, ahem, correctly speaking, I should

say, that is I. That's my *nom de plume. I* am 'Pimpernell.' And I'll tell you why I chose that name. It is an old-fashioned, lowly little flower which generally grows in the shade, and which people do not care to cultivate. The busy bee, however, does not disdain to sip its sweets occasionally, and that I, in my obscure retirement, may now and then afford a few moments' relaxation, and be even useful to those who are more busily engaged in the world, is a thought which fills me with a strange pleasure."

Miss Weevins' definition of herself, "an old-fashioned, lowly little flower which generally grows in the shade, and which people do not care to cultivate," touched Clive, and her eyes filled with tears. So did Miss Weevins'. She was never backward in following that lead.

"I did not know of such a flower as the pimpernell," said Clive, speaking in soft, kind tones, and laying her thin hand on Miss Weevins'; "but *I* will cultivate it now. I have always loved flowers, but of all of them, the pimpernell will be from this day my favourite one."

"I do not write for money," continued Miss Weevins, after an interval of sobbing evoked by this sympathy. "I have a little income of my own left me by my dear father, quite sufficient for my wants, and I really think I enjoy writing all the more when I feel I am not actuated by sordid motives. Besides, if I wrote for money, I could not afford the luxury of touching up to any great extent."

"Let me see some of 'Pimpernell's' contributions. I am sure I shall read them with the greatest interest."

Miss Weevins declared at first that she was sure she never could, but finally with much fluttering and sinking of spirit she retired, and soon returned staggering under a weighty scrap-book, with which she cannoned off the door on to the table, and finally all but buried herself under the sofa.

"It's an enormous book; one can't see where one's going when it's in front of one," said Miss Weevins, coming

up smiling, and placing the bulky volume on a table at Clive's elbow. "You'll find all my contributions to *The Workbox* cut out and pasted in its pages. Dear me, I really don't feel I can submit to the ordeal of being present while you read. I think, if you will allow me, I'll go out of the room and look at you through the key-hole."

"Oh no, do stay. I'm sure you could never write anything to be ashamed of," said Clive, placing a staying hand on Miss Weevins' arm, and opening the book at the same time. "What's this?"

"Oh! that," said Miss Weevins, blushing deeply, is a long correspondence between 'Crochet-needle' and myself, in the columns of *The Workbox*. It attracted—ahem—some little notice, I believe, and led to an interchange of autographs through the medium of the editor." Clive read:

"I have a piping bullfinch. I should be glad if any reader of *The Workbox* would tell me the best way of teaching it to sing, as I cannot whistle to it myself.—*Crochet-needle.*"

"I have read with interest Crochet-needle's article in the last issue of *The Workbox*. She should purchase a bird-organ and play it continually to her bullfinch. I distinctly remember an aunt of mine telling me as a child, that she knew a lady once whose bullfinch had been taught in a few lessons to sing beautifully by this simple and easy method.—*Pimpernell.*"

"I am much obliged for the graphic emanation from Pimpernell's well-known and powerful pen. Would Pimpernell further favour me? Where are the best and cheapest bird-organs to be procured?—*Crochet-needle.*"

"Crochet-needle (as crochet-needles always should) goes straight to the point, and at once takes up the thread of the subject——"

Clive said this was very good, and Miss Weevins covered her face with her handkerchief and laughed with mingled modesty and pride. Clive continued:

"I have made inquiries, and find that bird-organs can be procured at a trifling outlay from Mr. P. Hopkins, bird-fancier, No. 59, Chickweed Street, High Holborn.—*Pimpernell.*"

"Pimpernell was more than usually sparkling last week. Her pleasant *jeu d'esprit* concerning my *nom de plume* was intensely relished in our family circle. My father says *Punch* would give her ten pounds for it any day. My grandmother has had it explained to her, and is at present turning it over in her mind. If she sees it by next week's issue of *The Workbox* I shall have much pleasure in communicating the gratifying intelligence to Pimpernell and the readers of the Correspondence column. Would Pimpernell kindly tell me the cheapest and most expeditious *route* from Bayswater to Chickweed Street, High Holborn? we are all of us country mice.—*Crochet-needle.*"

"Crochet-needle possesses that true nobility of heart leading her to appreciate the kindly humour which smiles with rather than the trenchant wit which laughs at. Crochet-needle will find both green and yellow omnibuses plying between Bayswater and Chickweed Street. As Crochet-needle may not have had much experience in this mode of locomotion, I have obtained for her benefit a few useful particulars from my landlady. The fares vary from two to six pence. It appears that omnibus conductors are so accustomed to umbrellas and parasols in the back, and to be shouted at, and so generally engaged in altercations with rival conductors, that it is a work of considerable difficulty to attract their attention when nearing your destination. My informant tells me that she has for this purpose a

curiously-constructed tip to her umbrella, which partakes equally of the natures of a gimlet and a ferrule, and is an invention of her own. Crochet-needle is quite at liberty to make what use she pleases of this information.—*Pimpernell.*"

"Two nights ago we were aroused by screams proceeding from my grandmother's apartment. Terrified out of our senses, we rushed into her room, expecting to find her in the blood-stained grasp of some murderous burglar; but to our great relief we found that her screams were screams of laughter. She had seen the joke about the crochet-needle. It came on her all of a sudden, she says, as she lay awake in bed. This must have been about twenty minutes past three o'clock, as timed by a chronometer formerly in the possession of my late uncle, who was a distinguished officer in the Royal Navy——"

This was just the sort of thing that in the old days would have set Clive laughing merrily, but her once lively sense of the ridiculous was now dormant, if not dead. A feather does not tickle when a poisoned shaft is quivering in the flesh.

Here Clive broke off, and asked whether the piping-bullfinch ever got the bird-organ.

"Well, no," said Miss Weevins. "It led to nothing after all; you see all this took a considerable time, as *The Workbox* is a weekly paper, and at the tenth week of the correspondence the bullfinch escaped through the carelessness of a servant."

For one moment Clive smiled.

"Oh!" said Miss Weevins rapturously, "I was sorry at the time it was a failure, but now I'm delighted that it was, for it has brought into your face the first smile I have ever seen there. Don't think my simile coarse and strained, but

do you know it seemed to me like removing the slide from a dark lantern; I was quite dazzled."

The slide was soon on again, though, and the small face resumed its usual blank, heart-broken look.

"Oh, why," continued Miss Weevins, in agitated tones and almost kneeling at Clive's feet, "should you, who seem made to be loved, to be petted, to be cherished—you who, of all people I ever saw in my life, I would fancy the one most likely to be a husband's idol, a father's darling, or——"

"I was—I was—both," sobbed Clive, "and, please God, I am one still."

"Why should you, so loving and so lovable—why should you, I say, be thrown in sickness and in sorrow upon the world without anyone to comfort you or to love you, except a poor, strange, homely little woman who *does* love you though, fondly and deeply, and would lay down her life——?"

Here Miss Weevins utterly broke down. In one moment Clive's arms were round her neck, and the two mingled their tears together.

"And I love you too, darling," said Clive, as she kissed the wet cheeks.

"Oh! you cannot know the thrill that word sends through me. I have never heard it addressed to me since I was a child, and it falls on my ears with a sad, sweet sound, which carries me back to the days when I sat on a mother's lap, and afterwards on a widowed father's knee. It is the sweetest word in the whole language. Oh, I have longed to be loved! Not man's love. That I have always looked upon as beyond the bounds of possibility. I never knew what it was to have a glance of admiration from a man's eye. How should I? But the love I have longed for has been that of one of my own sex, pure and refined, and, and—yes, it was silly of me—I used to hope that she would be beautiful too. But never in my fondest hopes did

I picture to myself anything like you. I have never sought to pry into your affairs; I have even tried to smother my curiosity, but I know, I feel, that you are socially, as well as in every other way, my superior, and when I every day pray to God to remove that barrier, whatever it may be, which separates you from happiness in your own sphere of life, I also pray that you may not then altogether discard me. You won't, will you?"

"*I* discard you! *I* forget all your devoted kindness! Oh! never think that of me. You are my friend for life. Do you fancy that to find myself loved again as I have been loved, to know once more the happiness, the glorious happiness, I once knew would tempt me to forget you? Oh no. That I shall ever regain that position is as impossible as that I could ever prove such a monster of ingratitude. You say you never pried into my secrets. I know you haven't. But I will tell you why I am here an outcast. Confidence is the surest proof of affection, and you deserve that proof. My own darling husband, whom I love more and more day by day—God help me!—cast me away from him with loathing and bitter disdain. Don't let one thought rise up against him. He is mad, that is the only way I can account for it, and in his madness he accused me of running away from him with some man."

"Oh!" said Miss Weevins, looking steadfastly into Clive's pure face, "how could even madness go to that length?"

"Yes, in his madness he brought this fearful accusation against me. Oh Stud, so pure and holy a light shone round the tie which bound us together that I hardly knew such a thing was a possibility with *any* wife. Stud, Stud, how my heart is breaking to see you again!"

Clive placed her head on her sympathising confidante's shoulder, and lay moaning, while Miss Weevins hugged her, and sobbed as if her heart were breaking.

"In the midst of all my misery there is something to

look forward to, though," said Clive after a few moments. "My father—never was there such a father—ought to be home from India soon, and when I see his darling old face again, feel his arm round me once more, I shall be as near happiness as I can ever go now in this world. He is an old, one-armed soldier, service-worn, and maimed, and you too will love him. You will think, when you see him, what a hard, iron-looking man he is, until I lead you up to him by the hand and say, 'Darling, she saved my life, she has been a devoted, loving sister to me in sickness and in sorrows;' and then you will see what a soft, sweet face it can change into. You say you have never known what it is to feel man's admiration and love. You will know both then, of the purest and holiest description, when darling old Daddles looks down upon you and thanks you for all you've done for his forsaken castaway Clive."

## CHAPTER XXX.

### THE INTERESTING STRANGER.

MISS WEEVINS was now constantly in Clive's society. Sorrow and sickness had knit them closely together in the bonds of friendship. Real heart-intimacy ripens more quickly in the shade of adversity than in the sunshine of prosperity.

Miss Weevins was not always in the melting mood. At times she sought to be amusing as well as tender.

"I am very fond of looking out into the street," she said one day, after she had drawn Clive's arm-chair to the window and seated herself by it. "I make up little stories in my own mind about the people I see passing every day, and I believe in them so thoroughly that I should be quite disappointed if I knew their real histories, for they would be certain to be just the very opposite to what I had imagined."

"Yes," said Clive, with a weary sigh over her own wrecked happiness, "nothing turns out like what we expected. Oh how truly I can say that!"

"Ah!" said Miss Weevins, gently laying her hand on Clive's, "if nothing turns out as pleasantly as we had anticipated, we must recollect that, on the other hand, nothing turns out as badly as it had seemed. Have you never known what it is to dread a thing very much, and then

when it was over, has not your first thought been, 'Well, it was not so bad after all'?"

"What a good little thing you are!" said Clive. "You are quite right. It is not so one-sided after all, perhaps."

"My favourite street hero," said Miss Weevins, returning to the point of digression, "is a young man whom I first noticed passing here about a year ago. He was then dressed so fashionably and looked so out of place in this dingy street in his well-cut clothes, I could not imagine what circumstances had driven him here. But gradually and visibly before my very eyes things seem to have been going badly with him, and now, I am sorry to say, he is more in keeping with the locality than he used to be. But, strange to say, the less fashionably he dresses, I may almost say the shabbier he becomes, the more gentlemanly he looks. He is not strictly handsome, perhaps, but there is a *je ne sais quoi* about him which is very taking. He has quite a military air, too, and I am sure he must have been an officer in the army. Altogether, there is quite a romance about him, I'm certain, and I have set him down as a victim of unrequited affection."

"Does he wear an 'imperial'?" asked Clive, strangely interested.

"Yes, yes, an 'imperial,' a light-coloured one, which gives him such a *distingué* air, and which he is constantly putting his hand up to. Gracious goodness! what an extraordinary coincidence it will be if you know him!"

"I really think I do," said Clive, quite in a flutter. How her heart beat! If it did turn out to be Dolly Jones, he would be able to tell her, or, at all events, find out something about Stud, and she craved with a maddening hunger for the smallest scrap of information about him.

"It must be him! Rather a nervous trick of playing with his 'imperial,' you say?"

"Yes, yes."

"Above the middle height, and rather thin?"

"Yes, decidedly thin now—thinner than he used to be."

"With what one would call perhaps rather a mild face?"

"Yes."

"And a gentle, kind manner, as if he wouldn't hurt a fly? Oh, of course, though, you couldn't know anything about that."

"But I do, though," said Miss Weevins warmly. "It was only a week or so ago I saw him knock down a little child by accident as he was walking along wrapped in his own thoughts, and I noticed how shocked he looked with himself for his clumsiness, and how kindly and gently he picked her up and brushed her with his handkerchief. He was fully five minutes brushing and polishing, to save the little thing from a scolding when she got home; and then he gave her several coppers. Then, as he went down the street, he kept looking back at the child, and as she stepped into a shop to buy some sweets she held up a penny and laughed, as much as to tell him what she was going to do with it, and he nodded so brightly to her that—that the whole thing made the tears come into my eyes."

"Oh! that was dear old Dolly all over. It must be him. Tell me when you see him pass again; do."

"He generally goes out now in the afternoons; and I think he lives a little way up this street, or the next."

"It cannot be Dolly, after all, living in such a locality as this. Why, his father is one of the richest men in England," thought Clive. "But if it *is* him, that wretched girl is at the bottom of it all. If this person," she added aloud, "turns out to be the one I know, you are quite right in supposing him the victim of unrequited affection. At least, much worse than unrequited. It was trifled with and spurned. Some vain, heartless girl led him on, robbed him of his simple, loving heart, and then threw it away. It was fun for her, but it has been death to him. He is a dear, dear old friend of mine; quite like a brother, in fact."

Miss Weevins was now weeping copiously into her handkerchief. "My heart bleeds for him," she said. "I have seen a great change in him lately. I noticed it first a few days after you came here; indeed, I think it was the very day after, or the next day to that, that I saw him pass, and remarked how utterly crushed and broken, as if under some sudden blow, he seemed to be. To this point he had always appeared to me to be bearing up bravely against his troubles, but after that day he seems to have lost all spirit, and I never saw anyone look so utterly miserable as he does now. I have sometimes felt as if I could rush out into the street and beg him to let me sympathise with him."

Clive now hoped that, for his sake, it might not be her old friend. In fact, after a few moments' thought she felt it could not be. Dolly might be low in spirit, but he could not be so low in purse as to be vegetating in this wretched neighbourhood. He did not possess a monopoly for growing an "imperial." There were other men similarly adorned—there were brokendown officers by the score—and the kindness of heart which would prompt a man to give a ragged child a penny after he had knocked her down by accident was not, thank God, so very unique. Altogether, her grounds for supposing this blighted being to be Dolly were very light on being weighed. Nevertheless, she asked Miss Weevins to keep a sharp look-out for the interesting individual, whoever he might be, and to let her know when he passed; whereupon Miss Weevins' nose was glued for the remainder of the afternoon to that particular window-pane which commanded the longest range of observation down the street.

It was just getting dusk, when a cry of "There, there he is!" brought Clive to her feet, and, supported by Miss Weevins, she looked through the window.

Yes, it was Dolly! Dejected, forlorn, quietly, almost seedily dressed, walked the once "flush" and gorgeous Dolly Jones. No jewellery flashed and glittered about his

person ; no loud pattern awakened the astonishment of the beholder ; his hat and his boots no longer vied with each other in shiny gloss. The cold wind of adversity had winnowed all this light and worthless chaff from his nature.

"Call him in, call him in !" said Clive excitedly.

"Mary Ann !" cried Miss Weevins, no less excitedly, from the head of the staircase, "run over to the gentleman on the opposite side of the pavement, and say a lady lives here who knows him and is very anxious to see him." And then Miss Weevins, all in a twitter, hurried off to her own room.

Incited to unwonted speed of action by Miss Weevins' tones, Mary Ann dashed across the road and conveyed the message to the astonished Dolly.

The neighbourhood was not a very reputable one, neither was Mary Ann a particularly striking guarantee of respectability, and he hesitated to obey the summons.

"I'll give her, whoever she may be, the benefit of the doubt, however," he thought, and he followed Mary Ann.

As he came up the stairs, Clive trembled in spirit. His presence would, she knew, bring a painful rush of old associations, and then he would be sure to have heard something about her husband. What awful tidings might she not be on the eve of hearing !

Half expecting to find some painted Jezebel, and prepared for a retreat, Dolly entered, and in the dusky room failed to recognise the individual sitting in the arm-chair near the window, propped up by pillows.

"Dolly, dear old Dolly, come here. I've been ill and am still very weak. I can't get up to welcome you. Oh, how glad I am to see you, Dolly ! The sight of your old face does me good."

He started back with an exclamation of painful surprise, and stood ashy pale and trembling.

"Dolly, have you nothing to say to me ? Have *you* turned against me, too ?"

"Good God! Clive Dorrien! And has that villain, that doubly-damned villain deserted you?"

"Not a word against him, Dolly," she cried vehemently, "I shan't allow even *you* to say anything against him."

"Clive Dorrien, you turn me sick."

"Oh Dolly, what is there in shielding the one I love most in all the world to turn you sick? Is constancy, unswerving, undying constancy, loathsome in your eyes? It used not to be. Don't keep me in suspense. Have you seen him? Tell me where he is, and what he is doing."

"Have I seen him? No, I have not. Had I, I could not have kept my hands off the scoundrel, easy-going fellow though I am."

"Oh Dolly, Dolly, if *I* can forgive him, surely you can—*you*, his old friend——"

"He never was a *real* friend of mine."

"What! Stud no friend of yours? Studholme Dorrien not a friend of Dolly Jones?"

"I did not know you meant him. I did not think his name could have passed your lips."

"Whom, in the name of Heaven, could I have meant but Stud?"

"Why, the villain who brought you to this—Garstang."

"Garstang! Captain Garstang!"

She shuddered with loathing to think that even a madman's thought should have coupled her in sin with this man.

"Yes, the man you always pretended to dislike; and yet for him you threw over a man, like——oh, Clive! Clive! was there ever such vile hypocrisy as yours? was ever such deceit in so sweet a form?"

"Stop, stop! I did not even know with whom I was accused of running away. And do you mean to say, Dolly, that you, *you* in your sober senses, believe this of me?"

"Do I believe you guilty? Listen. I heard the story from your husband's own lips—the only ones I would have

believed it from. Not that I *did* believe him at first, though. I swore that it was a lie; that he had been tricked; that I could not have believed an angel from heaven, had he come down and told me this of you. He placed his hand on my shoulder, and with his face as white as mine is now I should think, for I feel sick to death at the thoughts of it all—with his white face close to mine, he said, 'Dolly, seeing is believing; and I swear to you I saw her with my own eyes clinging to that man.' Then he told me the whole story. Do I believe you guilty? Yes, Clive Dorrien, guilty of as foul a sin as ever blackened a woman's soul, and wrung the heart of a husband, a father, and a friend."

"Come here, Dolly, come here to the window," she cried, wildly. "My darling father's brave spirit fills me, and gives me courage to bear up against all this. Come here to the window where it is lighter. Don't shrink from me, Dolly. Now look into my face as you looked into his, and as you listened to him, in his madness, swearing me false, listen to me swearing myself innocent. Give me your hand, Dolly. As we shall both of us some day stand before the judgment-seat, and as I hope on that awful day we both will be saved, I swear to you, with a full consciousness and dread of God's wrath if I lie, that I am innocent; that I am Studholme Dorrien's true, faithful, loving wife; that never in deed, in word, or in thought have I wronged him. Guilty or not guilty, Dolly? What do you say?"

"Not guilty, thank God! Not guilty, from my soul, I say it, Clive."

Dolly was a fool. His verdict was dead against the weight of evidence. Any sucking lawyer could have told him that, "He swore to me," he said, "as solemnly as you have done; he showed me his arm broken by that scoundrel's bludgeon."

"Oh Stud, poor darling Stud; yes, I saw it too."

"And yet," said that idiotic Dolly, as he looked into her face, still heard the passionate tones of her own vindication

thrilling through his soul, "I can more easily believe that he was mad, or that I am, than that little Clive Belmont, whom I've known all these years, the best of daughters, the most devoted of wives, and the truest of friends, could stain her soul with a crime like this."

"I'll tell you the whole story, Dolly. But first tell me about him. Where is Stud? What is he doing?"

With clenched hands and starting eyes she awaited the answer.

"He has gone abroad."

"Abroad! Even the same country then does not hold us."

"Yes, he went to South America to travel, explore, shoot buffaloes—anything in fact to occupy his mind. He said he would be away about a year, and that when he came back he probably would go in for a political career."

"Did he send for you, Dolly?"

"No, he did not even know where I was. It was in all the papers under the heading of 'Extraordinary Elopement and Fracas in High Life,' and it described the whole thing without giving names, but in a way which left no doubt in the minds of those who knew them who the persons were meant for. I did not believe it. I knew how sometimes the purest and noblest are assailed by calumny, but still I went to your place. I found it shut up. I think I ran, I believe I did, wildly through the streets to his club, and there I found him, and he told me—— Gracious!" said Dolly, clasping his forehead, "I believe in your innocence now, from my soul I do, but it does not do to think of the thing altogether, for to think of it is to beat up one's brains like whipping an egg for egg-flip, and I don't think at the best of times my brains would be strong enough to stand such a liberty."

"Tell me, Dolly, have you heard anything about papa? Stud didn't write to tell him, did he? He could never have had the heart to have done that. You hesitate, Dolly. Tell me, tell me at once. Did he write?"

"Yes, he told me that he had written; that he had considered it his painful duty to do so, and he had told him the whole story."

"Stud!" she cried, clasping her hands together, and looking up with an agonised gaze, "you have killed him, you have killed him. He would not have believed it from his sister, but he will from you. Stud, my noble father's death will be at your door. It will kill him, I know it will. And yet I forgive you even that. You did not know what you were doing, darling. Oh Stud, Stud, how could you, even in your madness, break his fond, noble heart?"

In a paroxysm of sobbing she hid her face in her hands, and kept on repeating, "It will kill him, it will kill him."

"Don't, don't give way like this," said Dolly. "I have some good news for you. I was very anxious myself to see the dear old colonel as soon as he came home, and I wrote to the regimental agents asking them to let me know directly they heard any news of him, and a week ago I received a note from them telling me that the colonel had telegraphed to them that he had received that day news from England which made it imperative for him to return at once, and that he was to start that very hour. So he is hastening to you, Clive. He is nearly halfway home by this time, and when he looks into your sad, thin little face, his brave heart will leap with joy to read innocence in every—— What a nice view there is out of this window—I mean how the days are closing in, to be sure—I mean there's a muffin-boy passing."

The fact was, Clive's pitiful little face, pinched and hollowed by illness and sorrow, gazing at him with a wistful hunger for this crumb of comfort, had been too much for Dolly's feelings.

"Is this really true, Dolly? or do you think that my load of misery is greater than I can bear, and that you are justified in trying to lighten it a little by telling me this, even if it isn't true?"

"It is true, upon my word it is. He'll soon be here."

"Thank God! Don't turn your back, Dolly. I've lots more to ask you."

"Yes, yes, wait a minute until I see if they're going to take any muffins opposite. I don't believe they are."

Judging from Dolly's case, watching muffin-boys must be very trying to the sight, for when he at last turned round to Clive and said, "No, they didn't take in any," his eyes were very red and watery.

"How did you come here, Clive?" he asked.

In tones, sometimes faltering, sometimes drowned in convulsive sobs, and sometimes passionate, she told him all the story—the mock telegram, the adventures of the night, the interview with her husband in the morning, her search for a resting-place throughout that dark day of horror, until fainting she dropped into Mrs. Crump's arms, and finally fell into the loving hands of that good little Samaritan, Miss Weevins.

And as Dolly listened to the recital—the drive in the cab from Euston Square, the fall on the hard kerb-stone (the mark of which he saw with a shudder on her white temple), the scene with her husband, the temptation to destroy herself, her illness, and the kindness of Miss Weevins—he melted and glowed and shuddered, and melted again by turns.

> In faith, 'twas strange, 'twas passing strange;
> 'Twas pitiful, 'twas wondrous pitiful:
> He wished he had not heard her.

"Let me see this Miss Weevins," he said. "Let me see her at once, and let me in the name of friendship thank her for all she has done for you."

"She is very shy, Dolly, but I don't think she would mind seeing you. Will you stop and take tea with us? Not a banquet exactly, Dolly. It may literally be a meal of herbs, for watercresses very often form the staple article of food at tea-time."

Dolly blew his nose as he accepted the invitation, and pretended to be absorbed in the beauties of a print hung in the darkest corner of the little room. To him there was something inexpressibly touching in the idea of Clive being reduced to watercresses. It was not for Clive, however but for Miss Weevins, who was hardly carnivorous in her diet, that a profusion of this lowly and esculent plant always graced the board. "I like watercresses," had remarked Miss Weevins to Clive one evening. "They always put me so much in mind of meadows, and running streams, and the lowing of oxen." "And frogs," she might have added, but luckily for her peace of mind this association had never occurred to her.

A message was now sent to Miss Weevins informing her of the startling fact that Dolly was going to stop to tea ; and while she was engaged in a tremulous "titivation," Clive, in a spirit of sympathy, not of curiosity, strove to elicit something from Dolly concerning his fallen fortunes. But he was reticent even with her, and she let him alone. Miss Weevins appeared with the tea, and was introduced to Dolly. She was in the middle of an old-fashioned obeisance, half curtsy, half bow, when she was seized by both hands.

"I am one of those unfortunate creatures," said Dolly, "who can never say half what they mean ; but let me in my own imperfect way thank you for all you have done, and I hope I may always have your friendship, as you from this moment will always have mine."

What Miss Weevins said in reply is not worth recording, for it was not in the least what she meant. She did not know whether she was on her head or her heels. She was very pleased, however, and as the evening wore on, she gathered sufficient courage to enter occasionally into conversation with Dolly. He went away very early, for Clive's strength did not admit of late hours, and when he had gone, Miss Weevins said he was charming. "Charming, I

think he is. Dear me, I shall have very hard work to-night."

"Why, what are you going to do?" asked Clive.

"Well—ahem—I'm going to give my hero an—ahem—an 'imperial' all through the three volumes. I think it will add so to the interest in him—ahem! But you are tired; you must let me put you to bed now."

It had been a trying afternoon for Clive, and she was so low and weak that Miss Weevins begged to be allowed to bring the manuscript and write by her bedside.

For a long time Clive lay in her bed thinking, while Miss Weevins wrote; but at last the wearied brain rested, lulled to sleep by the monotonous scraping of "Pimpernell's powerful pen," as "Crochet-needle" had put it.

Still on went the pen, hard at work giving Eustace Fitzwygram, the hero, an "imperial" of the exact hue and pattern of Dolly's.

It was a work of considerable time. "'So and so,' said Eustace, drawing himself up to his full height," or "stamping his foot," or "smiling scornfully," had, of course, to be changed into "'So and so,' said Eustace, proudly stroking," "savagely pulling," or "carelessly twirling his imperial," as the occasion demanded. Once in a "fine frenzy" she even made him, in a very exciting passage, pluck it out by the roots, but this was only in the first volume, and on second thoughts she decided that, as there would not be time for it to grow again before he next appeared on the scene, she had better keep this thrilling incident for the conclusion.

As she went over the oft-traversed ground, following up Eustace's sayings and doings, she could not resist lingering fondly by the way to weep bitterly over the sad and laugh hysterically over the funny parts, as she had wept and laughed a hundred times before.

Thus well through the night, writing, weeping, and subduedly chuckling, sat Miss Weevins.

Looking round once for a happy inspiration, her eyes

fell on the sleeper. In an instant, Eustace's exquisite Roman nose was put out of joint. Softly on tip-toe she crept to the bedside and hung over the pillow, tenderly gazing.

Miss Weevins had once known a mother's love, a father's care, and the bright companionship of brothers and sisters; but one by one they had all passed away, victims to that fell disease consumption, and for ten years or more she had been left alone, mourning for the dead and shrinking from the living. And as she now looked upon the wan face, upon the arm and hand resting outside the coverlet, thin and small as a sick child's, and upon the white lips through which the breath of life came feebly, her heart was wrung by a fearful dread.

'Twas ever thus from childhood's hour
I've seen my fondest hopes decay.
I never loved a tree or flower
But what 'twas sure to fade away.
I never loved a dear gazelle,
To glad me with its bright black eye,
But when it came to know me well,
And love me, it was sure to die.

"Oh no, no, it cannot be," muttered Miss Weevins passionately, as these words floated through her mind. Of course she knew them; nearly everyone who speaks English does. "It cannot be! She is the only one who has 'come to know me well and love me.' Oh, she must not die!"

Sinking on her knees beside the sleeper, the loving heart prayed long and earnestly.

When she rose a smile was playing over the thin, white face.

With a heart full to bursting, Miss Weevins felt as if her prayer had been heard, and a merciful answer had been vouchsafed to her.

* * * * * *

While the little authoress was engaged in adorning

Eustace Fitzwygram with an "imperial," the owner of the model was perambulating the streets round about the dismal quarter. He could not settle down into the dingy little room which he rented for an infinitesimally small sum compared with his former expenditure. It could not have held him. It was black midnight—the black midnight of an English November — but to Dolly everything was brighter than he had known it for many days—Clive was pure and guiltless !

* * * * * *

At an early hour next morning, Mrs. Crimmins, Dolly's landlady, engaged in conversation across the back-garden wall with Mrs. Tucker, who kept lodgings next door.

"Your third floor looks uncommon bad, mum; he'd ought to go to the Consumptive Orsespittle, I should think," said Mrs. Tucker.

"No, it ain't consumption, mum. I'll tell you what's the matter with that young man," said Mrs. Crimmins, with an air of mystery which nearly brought Mrs. Tucker tumbling over the low garden wall. "'E 'as a bath every mornin' of 'is life reg'lar—a bath with a sponge the size o' yer 'ed. What 'uman frame could stand that wear and tear, I'd like to know ?"

"I never 'eard tell o' such a think in all my born days. Lor' ! it gives me water on the brain to think of it," said Mrs. Tucker, with a shudder. "And you don't mean to say, Mrs. Crimmins, mum, that you demean yourself to carry it up for a third floorer every morning ?"

"Mrs. Tucker, mum," said Mrs. Crimmins, with some *hauteur*, "I 'ope I know my persition better and what is doo to the sister'ood. The young man 'e carries it up 'isself. But that ain't neither 'ere nor there. You was sayin' he looked ill, and wot I tells yer is this, that ther' young man is a-washin' 'isself clean off the face o' this blessed earth—that's wot's the matter with him."

When Mrs. Crimmins saw Dolly, however, a little later

in the morning, she was forced to confess to herself that he seemed to have taken a decided turn for the better.

"It's weeks since I seen him look so bright," she said. "I ain't afeared now o' leaving the clothes-lines about for fear of his 'anging 'isself as I used to be."

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### RAISING THE WIND.

In a corner of Miss Weevins' sittting-room, which was now shared by Clive, stood a little old-fashioned piano, with a small body and very thin legs—what is sometimes called a spinet. Its silk was faded, its keys were yellow with age, its notes were jingly, but to Miss Weevins it was an object of tender admiration. To *her* eye it was beautiful; to *her* ear it was sweet. "The touch of a vanished hand, and the sound of a voice that was still," invested the little instrument with a tender and holy interest. It had belonged to her mother. Little brothers and sisters had danced and frolicked to its notes as her mother's fingers had rattled nimbly over its keyboard, and her mother's voice had blended sweetly with its music.

Since Clive's arrival, Miss Weevins had never touched the spinet, except to dust its yellow keys and its thin legs tenderly with an old silk handkerchief. She would as soon have neglected to wash her face in the morning as to have omitted these little attentions. But after a time, though she was very shy and nervous about performing before any one, even Clive, she thought a tune now and then might have an enlivening effect. Her musical repertory was about coeval with the instrument itself, and consisted of the

"Copenhagen Waltzes," "The Drum Polka," "The Battle of Prague," "Rousseau's Dream," and one or two other contemporaneous pieces. A fashionable new air, or a popular tune of the day on the spinet, would have been a harsh incongruity, jarring to the senses. When she was in a particularly rakish mood, or thought that Clive required a stimulant of extra strength, she would, after much coughing, suppressed laughter, and many false starts, as if guiltily conscious of perhaps overstepping the bounds of propriety, play a gay and roystering tune called "Drops o' Brandy." It was only, however, when Clive was very low that she felt justified in administering "Drops o' Brandy."

These were Miss Weevins' secular tunes, but sometimes on Sunday evenings, or late in the afternoons, when the shades of coming night hid her blushes, she would raise her voice in psalmody. Clive liked this better than "Drops o' Brandy," and would listen to the hymns with the tears rolling down her cheeks.

This was only one of many ways in which Miss Weevins tried to lighten her newly-found friend's load of care; but fresh anxieties arose in the stricken mind. In addition to her other troubles, the want of money was now beginning to press sorely upon Clive. Her slender stock, which she had happened to have with her when she came to Mrs. Crump, had all vanished in medicines, rent, and a few articles of clothing, for she had come with nothing but what she stood in. Dorrien had certainly said that her settlement would be paid to her wherever she might be, but such a thing as writing to ask him for it had never crossed her mind, and that he should have left the country without making any provision for her never for one moment raised a thought unfavourable to him. She wanted, longed for, his love—nothing else. Out of the question, also, was any application to her relatives. It would be only for a couple of weeks or so longer—for by then her father would be home from India—and in the meantime Miss Weevins' purse was

open to her with that liberality which is more characteristic of slenderly-filled than of well-lined purses. But she knew she must be already deeply indebted to Miss Weevins, who, however, would not admit this for a moment, and to feel herself a further tax upon the good-hearted little woman worried her sorely.

"Oh do not bother yourself about that," said Miss Weevins. "Everything I have in the world you are welcome to. I would go barefooted to serve you."

Still it *did* bother Clive, and Miss Weevins saw it did.

"Well, I'll tell you what; let's try and make some money," said the latter.

"How?" asked Clive.

"Let's look over the advertisements; we might see something."

Miss Weevins looked, and soon found the very thing. It was an advertisement headed "To either sex," and offered to furnish anyone, in exchange for twelve stamps, with the means of "earning from £2 to £3 a week, easily, honestly, and without publicity or interference with present occupation."

"Good gracious!" said Miss Weevins; "what a pity I never saw this before! What a lot of good one might have done in charity during all these years. Let's see. Say we earn £2 10*s*. each, that will be £5 a week. But you are sure to be cleverer at it than I am; and, say you earn the full amount, £3, that will be £5 10*s*. Dear me, here's another advertisement. Why this sheet of the paper is a perfect El Dorado. Here's a lady who can give us any amount of fancy work to do at a 'highly remunerative scale of payment,' on condition of our purchasing the materials from her for one guinea. I'm sure that's only fair and proper. There is nothing," continued the sharp and business-like little body, "like having a few irons in the fire. I'll send the guinea to this person, as well as the twelve stamps to the other."

"Oh no, don't; you'd better not send the guinea," said Clive. "Let's see what answer we get for the twelve stamps first. This may only be just a trap to catch the unwary."

"Oh dear no. Here, you see, it adds, 'This is genuine.' There's no mistake about it. I'll send the guinea," said Miss Weevins, with the spirit of a speculator, plunging heavily in "Eries" or "Egyptians."

Miss Weevins sent the twelve stamps and the guinea, and anxiously awaited the result. She was now fairly bitten by the mania, and in the meantime bethought herself of the Exchange and Barter Column of *The Workbox*, which had hitherto interested her only as a constant reader.

She diligently searched and ransacked all the receptacles containing her goods and chattels, and at last got together a few pieces of old-fashioned jewellery, for which she invited offers of useful articles in exchange from the readers of *The Workbox*.

"For," said Miss Weevins, "I may get something which I might have had to buy, and money saved is money gained."

Self-aggrandisement was not the guiding star of Miss Weevins' operations. Delicacies for Clive, and the amelioration of struggling humanity in general, were the beacons ahead.

In due course a letter, in reply to the twelve stamps, was received, with something hard in it—the philosopher's stone, of course! Miss Weevins was in such a flutter she could barely open the envelope. The something hard was a small brass pencil-case, and the letter informed them that by purchasing weekly from the writer five pounds' worth of these useful and elegant little articles, and retailing them to their friends at the low sum of one shilling apiece, a clear profit of from two to three pounds could be easily raised.

Then came the answers from the readers of *The Workbox*. They poured in by the dozen. Nothing, however,

was offered except postage stamps, monograms, guinea-pigs, and beetles' wings, except in the case of one person, who, by way of being irresistibly tempting, offered to throw in a second-hand respirator. This was blow No. 2. Blow No. 3 was heavier still. In vain Miss Weevins waited for an answer from the fancy-work lady. She never heard or saw anything of her guinea again, and a few days afterwards read in the police reports that the lady in question had been apprehended on the information of some of her victims, and charged with obtaining money under false pretences.

After this, Miss Weevins retired from the business of acquiring a fortune through the medium of newspaper advertisements.

"Suppose you were to try and write a story, a child's story," she said coaxingly to Clive.

"A story! Oh, I'm sure I never could," said Clive. "Even when I've had nothing on my mind I could not. I have often tried, long ago, and I could never get farther than 'Once upon a time.' At that point I used always to stick."

"Oh, but do try," pressed Miss Weevins, to whom Clive's listless despair was a source of keen anxiety. "It will arouse you a little. If you will only write one, I'll take it to some children's magazine. I've read that those sort of stories pay better than anything else. Will you try, to please me? It will all come if you only sit for a little with a pen in your hand and a piece of paper before you. If you'll only wait long enough, the ideas will seem to flow without any trouble like an electric current from your head, down your arm, through your fingers, and out at the pen. Will you try it, to please me?

"If I could only get her off her misery, and raise her occasionally above that dull level of despair, it might be the saving of her," thought Miss Weevins. "This continuous brooding will wear her out, mind and body."

"I'll try, then, just to please you," said Clive with a brave effort. "But what shall it be about?"

"Oh, anything. Just a simple little tale, a sort of a fable. You know there are sermons in stones, and there's a little story in everything if you only think it out——Oh! gracious goodness!" exclaimed Miss Weevins, rushing to the fireplace. "There's your beef-tea boiled over and nearly put the fire out. There!"

"What?" asked Clive, as Miss Weevins' eye rolled in a fine frenzy.

"Why, a subject. Write a story about *that*," replied Miss Weevins, as she enthusiastically waved the saucepan lid. There's a story to be made out of that, I daresay, if you'll just give your mind to it, only let it have a moral of some sort."

"What! about the pot boiling over?" said Clive hopelessly.

"Yes, if you'll only wait long enough for that electric current I told you of. He-he, do try."

Wearily Clive took paper and pencil from Miss Weevins' hands, and, just to please her kind nurse, strove to weave a little story out of the very mild culinary incident which was to be her subject.

So as not to interrupt the flow of ideas, Miss Weevins insisted on leaving the room, but such was her interest that she could not help popping her head in at the door at intervals, to say with her nervous "he-he" after each injunction, "Don't forget the moral." "Mind it has something funny in it." "Try and combine instruction with amusement," etc. etc.

"Dear me," soliloquised the little woman, about an hour afterwards, as she peeped at Clive through the key-hole, "I'm ashamed to go in again; but I'm very much afraid she is not introducing any of the facetious element at all. Her eyes are brimming over with tears the whole time she is writing."

It was fully another hour before Clive had finished her task.

"There, it's very silly and nonsensical," she said, "but I did it to please you. It's not exactly a tale of high life."

"And what's the moral?" asked Miss Weevins, as she took the paper.

"Oh, I suppose on the absurdity of quarrelling."

"Very good, a capital moral for children," said Miss Weevins; "could not be better. 'Let dogs delight' conveys the same moral, and is the most popular and the best known of all Dr. Watts' effusions."

With infinite zest Miss Weevins then read:

## CLIVE'S STORY.

A pot and a fire were once together in their usual relative positions. Everything went on very well indeed for a short time; the fire looked bright and cheery, and the pot simmered contentedly, and even at last began to sing. But this state of things did not last long. The fire commenced to leap about and to take liberties with the old pot, which began to grumble and mumble to itself ominously, and then at last called out, "Hi! I say, just drop them games, or flames, or whatever yer call 'em, will yer? You're a makin' me feel all of a quiver inside with yer nonsense."

You see it was not an enamelled saucepan, nor even a copper one, or its language would have been better. It was only an old iron pot.

The fire, however, did not pay any attention whatever to this, but went on leaping about the old pot in an exultant kind of way, playing under it and running up its sides, until the poor old thing was nearly choking with wrath.

"Oh dear!" it spluttered out. "I'm in such a rage. I feel a'most a bilin' over. I know I shan't be able to contain myself much longer."

Still the fire went on just in the same way.

"If yer goes on like that I'll bile over," said the pot. "I will, I tell yer."

"Boil over, or 'bile' over, as *you* call it, who cares?" said the fire, who fancied himself greatly superior to the pot. "Who cares for a tinkered-up old pot?"

"What are yer a-talkin' of?" said the pot angrily. "Ain't yer proper place under me, I'd like to know? Ain't I always put over yer? What are yer a-talkin' of, then? The imperence o' some people, to be sure!"

"'Imperence,' indeed! Why, you vile old unenamelled stew-pan, do you know that I once, just for my own amusement, destroyed London?" said the fire proudly.

"I don't believe it," said the pot, who knew nothing about history. "The most I've ever know'd yer do is to set the chimbley afire, and bring the burnin' soot down atop o' my 'ead, and *then*, my first cousin the fryin'-pan 'elped yer with a bit o' fat. Burn down Lunnun indeed! 'Ow about water, eh?"

The fire certainly paled a little at this.

"'Ow about water, eh?" repeated the pot tauntingly. "Water puts yer out terribly, don't it? Can't say it does me. I'm all the better for a drop o' water, I am. Water, water, yah!"

The fire looked horribly blue. "Spirits agree with me better, certainly," it said feebly to itself. "I should be all the better for a drop now." The pot saw his advantage and followed it up in a spirit of sarcastic banter.

"I wonder now if there's a nice well o' water about 'ere? or a good pump 'andy? or a cistern? or a spring? 'Ow d'yer feel yerself now? Yer don't look so bright as yer was, some'ow. I 'ope, sir, I ain't been touchin' on any subjecks of a onpleasant natur'?"

All this of course was fearfully exasperating to the fire. It was just like going up to a Frenchman and keeping on whispering into his ear "Waterloo."

"Oh! ain't I a-gettin' the best of it just," chuckled the

pot to himself. "'E ain't got a word to say for 'isself. 'E ain't got a crackle in 'im." Then it went on without any pity or mercy.

"I've heard they've got what they calls a 'idrant laid on near 'ere—and there's a plug, not far off—and a turn-cock lives close by. I say, 'ow's Cap'en Shaw?" concluded the pot, with a mocking laugh and winking his lid. This was his trump card. "'Ad 'im there!" he said to himself with a chuckle. The fire nearly went out altogether at this, and for some moments it only flickered feebly. It was the unkindest cut of all.

"Tooley Street, Chicago, Rome and my musical old friend Nero, Covent Garden Theatre," it muttered to itself, in a vain effort to keep up its spirits by recalling a few of its principal exploits. But there was no rallying under the last blow.

"'Ooray for Shaw!" continued the pot. "Three cheers for——"

This was too much for the fire. It was just the same as shouting out, "Hooray for Bismarck!" under the nose of the Pope of Rome, or "Hooray for the Pope of Rome!" under the nose of Mr. Whalley, M.P. It blazed out in a fearful rage.

"Look 'ere," said the pot, suddenly changing its tones, and spitting out its words as well as it could in its emotion, "as sure as I bile over I'll put yer out, and so I tells yer."

The fire at this made a fierce dart at the pot, on which the pot boiled over, and a torrent of wrath descended on the fire, which, notwithstanding its bragging, stopped its leaping and games pretty sharp; and if the pot did not put it out altogether, as it said it would, it very nearly did.

Now directly the old pot had boiled over, it at once calmed down and repented very much of its pastimes, because it knew well from experience what would happen; for, sad to relate, this was not the first time the pot and the fire had carried on these games. They were always at it.

"Oh dear, here she comes," said the pot. "Oh, how I wish I hadn't lost my temper!" and it closed its lid tight as if it dreaded to see what was going to happen.

But it was too late. It was seized in an angry grasp, shaken violently, and then put in the corner of the hob in disgrace; while it had the mortification of hearing the fire hissing at it all the time.

"Oh dear," said the fire, "it's my turn now. How I wish I had not made it so hot for the old pot. Here she is with that horrible instrument of torture she calls a poker."

And then the fire got first of all a crack on the top of the head which made a lot of sparks fly before it; then a poke in the ribs; and then a stirring-up that made it roar.

Miss Weevins was quite ecstatic over the story, and pronounced it a marvel of wit.

"It is really peculiarly fitted for children," she said, as she submitted it to a loving analysis. "It combines so easily and naturally amusement with instruction, by stimulating curiosity in a useful direction. For instance, a child would naturally ask if the fire really ever did burn down London; and then it would be told all about the Great Fire of London, and *that* historical fact would be impressed on its mind, together with some conception of the fearful power of the element, leading happily to a wholesome dread of it, which to children, who are always fond of playing with fire, would be a most valuable lesson. You see you most skilfully kill two birds with one stone there. Then there is mention made of Waterloo, another great and glorious event in England's history, which would be certain to lead to another query and consequent explanation. Then in the elegant phrases of the fire, compared with the ungrammatical utterances of the pot, there is every incentive to an intelligent child to acquire the rudiments of syntax with a view—— By-the-way, now, how ever were you able to put those expressions into the mouth of the pot? I confess your

familiarity with the lowly phase of life in which this language is spoken fairly puzzles me. When I was reading the pot's remarks I could have fancied I was listening to Mrs. Crump, or the laundress, or the old charwoman who comes in sometimes. How *did* you manage it?"

"I told you," said Clive, "that my father is an old soldier, and I used to go and see the wives of the men of his regiment. Poor things! they had a hard struggle to get on, and I think they were always glad to see me, for I generally took something for them or the children, and—what was still more appreciated by them, I think—I used to listen to their grievances. I suppose it was from them I picked up the style. I'm afraid, too, I was rather fond of mimicking them at times," concluded Clive with a sigh, as she recalled how often she had made "Old Daddles" laugh over her imitations of Mrs. Full-Private Buggins complaining of the "stuck-uppishness" and pride of Mrs. Lance-Corporal Stiggins, or some other lady, in the recital of an equally glowing wrong.

"Your powers of observation, I should fancy, must be very keen," said Miss Weevins admiringly. "I am sure any publisher would snap at the story and give twenty guineas for it at the very least. It's so amusing."

"I tried to be funny to please you, dear," said Clive.

"Ah!" she thought with a weary sigh, "I used to think that people who wrote funny stories were always bursting with spirits the whole time they were writing them; but I see now that it can be very like the old story of the clown who made jokes and cut capers while his wife and children were dying of sickness at home, and his heart was breaking over it all."

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### PIMPERNELL'S EDITOR.

Of course, Dolly Jones was a frequent and a welcome visitor at Mrs. Crump's. He generally appeared with a gashed chin, as if he had been making clumsy and half-hearted attempts to cut his throat. Suicidal mania, however, was not the cause. Poor Dolly, the erst overdressed, bejewelled fop, now lived a life of strange shifts and straits. His looking-glass, in spite of all attempts at steadying it with pieces of folded paper, had a way of turning right over at critical moments, and presenting its back to the gazer, to whom the manœuvre imparted a sensation of turning a back summersault; and to feel as if he were performing this acrobatic feat while removing the superfluous beard from his chin was not conducive to easy or steady shaving. The only wonder is that Dolly escaped decapitation.

In the olden days of splendour, Dolly's toilet used to perplex himself and his servant terribly. It was so hard to know exactly what to put on; what waistcoat would suit this tie; what coat would go well with these trousers; or what general style of dress would befit the weather or the occasion. But now there was none of this *embarras de choix*. His wardrobe, by a process hereafter described, had dwindled down until it was little more extensive than that of

Christopher Sly, who had "no more doublets than backs, no more stockings than legs, nor no more shoes than feet," and thus the process of dressing had been much simplified.

"If right and wrong lay clearly defined before you, you'd be like iron, Dolly; I know you would." He had never forgotten these words, and they had been the key-stone of his resolution. The right path which now lay clearly defined before him was to rely solely on himself, and unswervingly he followed it through penury and privation. His father had cast him off, and from no man would Dolly ask or receive assistance. Nearly all the price of his commission had gone in taking up the bill he had backed for Garstang, and in paying off a few outstanding debts; and after he had been out of the service a few months, he found that his worldly possessions consisted solely of the few thousands left him by his mother, which brought in about one hundred a year, and an enormous wardrobe. Neither the income nor the wardrobe went very far. Dolly had never before been brought into close contact with poverty, and his heart was being constantly wrung by the straits and privations which he witnessed every day around him. Out of his miserable pittance he often assisted those in want, and towards the ends of quarters, when he himself was little better off than those he helped, his fellow-lodgers were not above accepting a piece of jewellery, to be converted into money, or even a coat or a pair of trousers. Once through a whole month's illness he had kept a consumptive clerk, who dragged on a wretched existence, with a wife and child, in the garret above him.

On Dolly's calling at Mrs. Crump's the day after Clive had written her story about the pot and the fire, he found Miss Weevins in the passage, bonneted and shawled, just on the point of starting off on an expedition—an expedition, too, of great importance, to judge from Miss Weevins' demeanour, which, to say the least, was excited.

"She has written a story, and I'm going to take it to the

editor of a magazine for children which I have often seen advertised in the papers," said Miss Weevins, who was beginning to feel quite at home now with Dolly. "It's really wonderfully witty, and amusing, and instructive. It is very short, and will command instant acceptance ; there is no doubt of it. In fact, if you could get a room full of editors there would be quite a fight as to who should get it. I'm convinced there would be. You must read it through before it goes."

Miss Weevins undid the small roll of manuscript, and made Dolly read it through there and then.

It was quite enough for him that Clive's brain had created, Clive's hand written, the story, and his encomiums came up to even Miss Weevins' expectations.

Wishing her every luck in her mission, he conducted her to the gate, and betook himself to see Clive, and sit with her during her devoted little nurse's absence.

Thus employed, we will now leave Dolly to accompany Miss Weevins. With about the equanimity of a startled hare she pursued her way, the precious roll tightly clutched in her hand. So seldom did she stir out of doors that the noise and bustle of the streets, when she got into the frequented parts, quite scared her. At the different crossings in her route she was the innocent cause of much bad language on the part of 'busmen and cabdrivers. She would rush forward, and then suddenly run back like a little mouse to its hole ; then give another dart into the street, and when well in the middle would dance about undecidedly, flapping at the horses' heads with her parasol or her reticule, until she was rescued by a policeman or some stout passer-by and carried to the haven of the opposite pavement. In fact, Miss Weevins at a crossing was as serious a detriment to the general traffic as if she had been that identical "vaggin-load o' monkeys vith their tails burnt off," which, Sam Weller tells us, is of all objects the one most trying to equine nerves.

At last, after miraculously escaping all these perils of the road, she found herself, with a fluttering heart, inquiring of a clerk in a dingy office if the editor of the *Child's Own Magazine* were in. To beard a real live editor in his den was a piece of temerity she could never have been capable of in her own behalf, but armed with Clive's roll of manuscript, which she held in her hand like a *bâton*, she felt that she could have stormed Paternoster Row.

"Yes," was the reply, "but he is engaged at present. Will you step in here and wait?"

Whoever yet hit off an editor when he was not "engaged at present?"

Miss Weevins gratefully accepted the invitation, and found herself in an ante-room in which were seated about half-a-dozen ladies, who, to judge from appearances, belonged to that female army of martyrs known as decayed gentlewomen. The apartment was very much like a surgeon's waiting-room. Anxiety and fear were on every countenance as they all sat awaiting their turn. One by one, in fear and trembling, they were called into the great man's presence. Some came out again with buoyant steps and brightened eye, others with looks of blank despair. In the spirit, little Miss Weevins sorrowed or rejoiced with each lucky or luckless aspirant. It was all very nervous work for Miss Weevins, and her smelling-salts were so continuously up to her nose that that feature must have been highly pickled before the third lady had been called in. At last it came to her turn, and, her teeth positively chattering with fright, she was ushered into the *sanctum*.

"Will you sit down?" said the presiding genius, politely enough, and at the same time waving his hand to a seat a few feet in front of him.

Miss Weevins concluded a most elaborate and reverential obeisance, and sat down so gingerly on the extreme edge of the chair indicated that it nearly tilted her forward into the editor's lap. With a shudder at the thought of such an

awful catastrophe, she made a sudden effort at counteraction and nearly went over backwards. Finally she settled down in the middle of the chair, trembling from head to foot, and staring with a fascinated gaze at the editor.

"What can I do for you?" he asked kindly. "Got some magazine article there?"

"Ye—yes; it's some magazine article I've got here," replied Miss Weevins, whose reasoning powers for the moment were not strong enough to lift her above repetition. Had the editor said to her, "Here, madam, is a cheque for five hundred guineas, which shall be yours if you will promptly tell me your name and sex," Miss Weevins would have lost the golden opportunity to a dead certainty.

"Well, if you leave your article I'll look over it, and if you give me your address, or choose to call in about a fortnight's time, I'll tell you what I can do with it."

With a desperate effort she managed to pluck up enough courage to ask for a more summary sentence. "It is very short; would it be—ahem, too much—ahem, to ask you to cast your eye over it now?" she pleaded. "If he only just catches sight of it," she thought, "that will be enough. His practised eye will at once detect its sterling value."

"I fear I have not the time at present, but I won't keep you longer than a week."

A bitter tear of disappointment trickled down Miss Weevins' cheek.

"It's very short. You could read it in five minutes," she said.

"Well, well, I'll devote five minutes to it then," said the editor kindly; "your composition, of course?"

"No; a friend's, a very dear friend's."

"A lady?"

"Yes; oh, I am sure, if you could only see her sweet—— Oh, I beg your pardon—ahem!"

The terrible editorial eye was now glancing down the

written sayings of the pot and the fire, and Miss Weevins watched it spell-bound.

Once he smiled.

"Dear me," thought Miss Weevins, "that must be where the pot calls the frying-pan his first cousin. Oh no, it can't be, though, for his eye is at the top of the page, and that, I recollect, is halfway down. It must be where the fire says——Dear, he's finished it already!"

"Really," began the editor, as he rolled up the manuscript, and scratched his chin with it——

Miss Weevins composed herself to hear, "Really, in the whole course of my editorial experience I have never come across anything so strikingly original, witty, and instructive as this little tale," and she could scarcely believe her ears when, instead of this, there fell on them in slow and measured accents, "Really, I do not see what use I could make of this; further, I think I am right in telling you that it would be an act of real kindness on your part to dissuade your friend from launching her bark on the troubled and treacherous waters of literature. In this little fragment you have submitted to me I can detect no merit whatever, or no germs of merit which would justify an encouragement of any further efforts in this direction. They would only bring loss of time and bitter failure. I am very sorry, but I must beg to decline it with thanks. Good morning."

"Good morning. Thank you," said Miss Weevins, as, blinded by her tears of bitter disappointment, she rose and feebly tried to walk through a large cupboard, where the accepted contributions were kept.

"This way," said the editor, with a kindly smile, as he opened the door for her and bowed her out of the room.

He was accustomed to harden his heart to all sorts of appeals, from a young lady's request for a five-pound note for a story, because she "wanted a new bonnet so awfully," up to the entreaties of fallen and starving gentility; but as Miss Weevins took the story back with meek sadness and

departed sorrowfully, he was very nearly so far forgetting himself as an editor as to call her back and accept the contribution out of sheer compassion. He did not do anything of the kind, however; business prevailed, as it generally does, and Miss Weevins dejectedly trudged homewards.

As she neared her destination she suddenly "perked up," as if inspired with some happy thought, and with accelerated and livelier step she accomplished the remainder of the distance.

On reaching home, she opened the door stealthily and crept up to her bedroom like a thief in the night. On tip-toe, so as not to be heard by Clive beneath, she went to her chest of drawers, and, from under the paper lining of the top right-hand drawer, produced an old-fashioned pocket-book with a tongue that went about twice round.

"There, this is *my* editor," she said, with a waggish shake of the head; "and though he's only made of leather, I'm sure he'll be more discriminating than if he were real flesh and blood, to judge from my morning's experience."

From one of the pockets of her editor she took a ten-pound note, about half the whole stock which was to last until the end of the quarter, and then put him back again into his corner, together with the story of the "Pot and the Fire," which last she put away with tender and loving hands. Then creeping stealthily down the stairs she banged the front door very loudly, and rushed up into the sitting-room, as if fresh from her journey.

"There, there," she said, waving the ten-pound note triumphantly about, "I knew it would be a success. I told you so. It ought to have been twenty though, at the very least;" and throwing herself on Clive's neck she burst into tears. "Don't mind them," she said, "they're tears of joy; my feelings have been rather overwrought by the morning's excitement."

"I am so pleased," said Clive, kissing her affectionately,

"for your sake, for I know if it had been refused how disappointed you would have been. I never expected though it would have been taken, and I think ten pounds an enormous sum for it. Thank you, darling, for all the trouble you've taken."

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### DOLLY'S EDITOR.

CLIVE'S finances were as great an enigma to Dolly as Dolly's were to Clive. Each had spoken on the puzzling subject to the other, but at the very outset each had seen that the subject was a painful one and not to be followed up. *She* was shielding a husband's heartlessness, *he* a father's.

Day after day passed on, the arrival of the Indian mail was reported in the papers, and Colonel Belmont had not appeared. On this Clive became still more low and weak. The hopes of seeing him so soon had buoyed her up a little, but now that hope was crushed, and the most painful anxiety and dread filled her mind. Dolly inquired at the regimental agents, but they could tell him nothing which he and she did not know already.

"Dolly," said Clive one morning when Miss Weevins was out of the way, probably down in the kitchen superintending the manufacture of some wonderful delicacy for the invalid, "I can bear this suspense no longer. How much is a telegram to India? Don't tell her anything about it, for I know she would at once rush off and spend her last penny in telegraphing. I have about two pounds left, Dolly. Will you take them and see if it will be enough, and, if it is, telegraph to the regiment to ask about him?"

Never had poverty cut so deeply to Dolly's heart as at this moment.

"Yes, of course I will. But why not write another story? The last was such a success, you know, and I'd take this one this time," said Dolly, who was behind the scenes. "I know an editor who would be sure to give something for it."

"Well, it would be better, perhaps," said Clive; "for after all those two pounds aren't mine; they're hers. I'm sure I must owe them to her over and over again, and if I can make a little money, I'm not justified in sitting down with my hands before me. Thank you, Dolly, for the suggestion. I'll try and act on it."

Clive lost no time, and set to work about her task right bravely. Writing when the mind is sick is more trying than climbing a mountain when the body is weak, and she was sick in body as well as in mind. After about a couple of hours' work, she handed a short tale to Dolly, and he set off forthwith. Instead of going, however, directly to his editor, he hurried to his room, and, opening a cupboard, took down from a peg a most sumptuous travelling-coat. It was lined throughout with Astrachan fur, and the collar and cuffs were rich with the same material. In Dolly's palmy and foolish days, he had given about fifty guineas for this magnificent garment, and it had sheltered him from the cold blast during many an hour's travel by sea, by rail, and by road. It was about the last relic of departed grandeur that remained to him. At a certain wet picnic, some years back, Clive Belmont's little form had nestled in its soft folds, safe from the rain and cold; and from that day it had been a hallowed article in Dolly's eyes. He had never since that occasion even worn it himself. Starvation would not have wrested it from him. But now it was for her, and that altered the case.

We have seen that Miss Weevins' editor lived in her right-hand top drawer under the paper lining. Dolly's editor resided in an establishment of greater pretensions. It was a corner house with shop windows and three golden balls

over the door; and thither he repaired with the sumptuous travelling-coat over his arm. An interview of about ten minutes resulted in Dolly's reappearance from under the shadow of the three golden balls, without the coat over his arm, and with ten pounds and a ticket in his pocket. Part of this sum he spent in at once telegraphing to Major Hetherington for news of the colonel, and with the balance he hastened back to Clive.

"Ten pounds for that trash! Oh Dolly, I feel almost ashamed to take it. Why should anyone who can sign their own name ever be in want of money, if ten pounds can be made so easily as this? Why don't you take to writing these sort of things, Dolly? Will you, to please me?"

"You might as well ask me why I don't take to flying. What are you looking so earnestly at, Clive?"

Dolly was thinly clad, though the day was bleak, and he had a bad cough. His hands, too, and his nose were blue with the cold. His last overcoat he had given to the consumptive clerk at the commencement of the winter.

"Oh Dolly," said Clive, with tears springing to her eyes, as she contrasted Dolly's present condition with his former splendour, "you will take——Don't be proud, Dolly, with such an old friend as I am. *Do* take the remainder of this, *do*."

He looked so pained that she stopped pressing him.

"Why don't you wear warmer clothes, then, Dolly? Where is that coat all lined with fur and with fur collar and cuffs that we used to tease you so about, and call you old Count Von Strogonoff when you had it on. Do wear it to please me on these bitter, damp November days, or you'll really get ill. You recollect it, don't you?"

"Let's see——"

"Oh Dolly, surely you must recollect it. I know *I* do, for one day when we were out at a picnic it came on to rain, and you insisted on wrapping me up in it all the day. Don't you remember that, Dolly?"

"Yes, I think I do."

"I should so like to see it again. You must wear it to-morrow to——Why, Dolly, what's that sticking out of your coat-pocket?"

Dolly gasped in speechless confusion.

"Why, Dolly, I do declare it's the story you said you got ten pounds for——"

"Yes, yes; well, don't you see of course I didn't say it was coming out just yet, and the ten pounds was paid for its future——"

"Dolly, you look confused."

"No, not a bit, not in the least," said Dolly, pulling out his handkerchief and dabbing his head as if he were in the dog-days, whereas, as I've said before, his nose was blue with cold.

As the handkerchief was drawn from the pocket something accompanied it and fluttered on to Clive's lap.

"Dolly, what's this?" she said, almost recoiling with horror. "It's a——no, Dolly, I insist upon looking at it. My suspicions are aroused. "It's—it's a pawnbroker's ticket, I do believe. Yes, dated this very day, too! 'A travelling-coat lined and trimmed with Astrachan fur. Ten pounds.' The very identical coat I was just speaking about! Oh Dolly, poor old Dolly," sobbed Clive, "he has sold the very clothes off his back for me. I always found you out, Dolly. But oh——"

He snatched the ticket from her, and fled from the room.

"I thought," said Dolly, as five minutes afterwards he furiously paced up and down Mrs. Crimmins' small apartment, "that adversity was teaching me a little common sense and tact, but I find I've been mistaken. I was born a fool, I grew up a bigger fool, and I suppose I shall die the biggest fool that ever lived."

* * * * * *

The reply from Major Hetherington arrived late in the

evening, and Dolly, though he dreaded facing Clive after his blunder that day, lost not a moment in taking it to her. The telegram merely said:

"Colonel left suddenly for England five weeks ago; should have arrived by this time. Nothing heard of him here since departure. Love from all. Will write to you."

Blank despair settled on Clive's sad face as she read these unsatisfactory words. The best thing she could now think was that he was detained by illness on the way. Nothing else, she knew, could have stopped him.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### AGAINST THE WORLD.

DREARY, dismal, damp November! Guy Fawkes, fog, Lord Mayor's show, sickness, and suicide.

Such are its dreary associations to Londoners. "*Le mois de mort!*" as the French call it. "Month of self-murder!" as we might term it, for statistics prove that there are more suicides in London in November than in any other month of the year, and I don't wonder at it.

It was on a miserable afternoon towards the end of this dreary month—an afternoon of fog and damp—that Clive, looking more fragile and delicate than ever, sat in her chair, pensively gazing into the fire; while Miss Weevins, for the sake of such sickly light as managed to struggle through the fog, sat by the window hard at work touching up the novel.

A thick pall of fog hung gloomily over every object outside, and a little way down the street a wheezy old organ, as if the fog had crept into its pipes, was slowly grinding away at an ancient and melancholy tune, the "Old Hundredth," I think. Shakespeare tells us that

> When griping grief the heart doth wound,
> And doleful dumps the mind oppress,
> Then music, with her silver sound,
> With speedy help doth lend redress.

Not always, I think. It depends a good deal on the instrument and the performer. Some kinds of music have

just the contrary effect. I know of nothing in this shape more conducive to "doleful dumps" than the strains of an old-fashioned barrel-organ, in a dull London street, on a dull afternoon; and I think if these instruments of torture had been introduced into England along with tobacco and potatoes, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the immortal bard would never have penned the above lines without, through the mouth of one of his characters, especially excepting the "silver sound" produced by barrel-organs. The organs which play the popular tunes of the day are not quite so depressing. In fact, under certain circumstances, they can even kindle pleasant and kindly feelings. When passing some crowded alley, you look down on hearing an organ's strains, and see Maria Hann, aged about ten years, with the care of the baby off her mind for the moment, footing it merrily on the pavement, surrounded by a bobbing, capering circle of ragged but happy infantile humanity, you must be churlish indeed if you hurl anathemas at the head of that grinning, grinding denizen of Saffron Hill, whatever you may do at other times. But the peculiarly melancholy organs are those which play slow old tunes to which nothing but a funeral procession could keep time.

The combined influence of weather, locality, and organ, superadded to the weight of care which already oppressed Clive, crushed her down until her misery seemed to have reached its lowest depths this afternoon. Dolly's presence might have been a mild antidote, a drop of comfort in her ocean of trouble, for he had been the only link between the present and the joyous past left to her, but some days before he had disappeared most suddenly and unaccountably. A short but kind note just announcing that he had been called away on important and pressing business, was all the light he had seen fit to throw on his movements, and he was much missed by Clive and Miss Weevins.

In the latter's hands, the process of "touching up" seemed to progress slowly this afternoon, as if the fog had

crept even into her brains. "Pimpernell's powerful pen" was evidently not itself, and the little woman's eyes were constantly wandering from her paper to the drooping figure near the fire, and then brimming over. Had her ideas only flowed as readily as her tears, "Pimpernell" would have thrown off sheet after sheet like a steam printing-press. The doctor had that day given her a very bad account of Clive. He and his science, he said, were utterly powerless. The physician might cure the body, but he could not reach the mind, and if that were not speedily healed his skill would avail nothing. She was sinking now, he thought.

"Oh, if her father would only come!" thought Miss Weevins, after a long, tearful gaze at Clive. "What can keep him? What can have happened to him? If he does not come soon, I believe he will never see her again."

Upon arriving at this conclusion, Miss Weevins' feelings were too much to allow of inaction. She rose and went to her old-fashioned spinet. She would give her troubled soul vent in melody. "The Copenhagen Waltzes," "Drops o' Brandy," or "The Battle of Prague," would have jarred harshly on her feelings now. She would have none of them. The "cries of the wounded" (crossed hands), or the "moans of the dying," in the last piece might certainly have been in harmony with her frame of mind; but something still more in accordance with the thoughts which stirred her heart rose to her lips, and filled the tiny dark room with a trembling and sweet sound:

I heard the voice of JESUS say,
Come unto me and rest,
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down
Thy head upon my breast.
I came to JESUS as I was,
Weary, and worn, and sad;
I found in Him a resting-place,
And He has made me glad.

Here the singer leaned her elbows on the keys, and the

sound of crying came from the dark corner in which the spinet stood.

"Oh, do go on," said Clive, as the tears trickled down her thin cheeks. "I do like to hear it so."

Miss Weevins struck a chord and tried hard at the next verse, but the struggle ended in a passionate sob.

"Oh, I cannot, I cannot," she said; and leaving the spinet, she came and sat down at Clive's feet, with one of the wasted little hands between hers.

"I'm a pretty sort of a nurse, I am," said Miss Weevins to herself with great severity. "I can do nothing without crying." She then wiped her eyes, kissed Clive, stirred the fire, and put the kettle on.

"There, dear, I'll make you a cup of tea, and, it's such a horrible gloomy afternoon outside, we'll light the candles and try and make the room look a little more cheerful."

The candles were lit, and Miss Weevins went to the window to pull down the blinds. She was just taking one last, though anything but fond, look at the fog and gloom outside, when a hansom cab drew up a little way down the street and attracted her attention. A white-haired old gentleman, bent in figure, feeble in gait, got out, and, after paying the fare, walked along the pavement, glancing up at the numbers over the doors.

Miss Weevins' heart beat like a steam-hammer.

"Yes, it must be. He has only one arm. He's stopping; he's coming in at the gate! It is her father! God be praised!"

Miss Weevins then rushed from the room.

* * * * * *

"My child! my child!"

"Daddles!" shrieked Clive. "Oh! my own darling!"

Excitement lent her strength for the moment, and she rushed to him. His arm was round her at once, and she was clinging, madly, fondly to him.

It was some time before either spoke. She was sobbing

convulsively on his breast, and the arm which was round her slender, wasted form was trembling like an aspen-leaf.

"Clive," he at last said, in broken accents, as he pressed her closer to him, "I received your letter at Dover this morning. Oh my child, what hopes it raised in my soul. But, Clive, I dared not cherish them. There was one person, but one, in this world, in whose honour and truth I believed as implicitly as in yours, and he swore the very opposite to what you did. *He* had everything to lose by the assertion; *you* had everything to gain by the denial. I almost cursed—I believe I did—the power of reasoning which dashed the cup of hope and comfort from my lips. But I said, if she can look her old father in the face, and say what she has written in this letter, I shall——Oh, Clive!"

He broke off, and awaited her words, with hope and dread rending his heart in their fierce battle there.

"I can! I can!" she cried with a passionate ring in her tones, which thrilled his very soul; and throwing her thin arms round him, she turned her face up to his. "I can, oh my darling father. True to you, true to my own husband, has been, is, and ever will be your poor Clive."

With a long, piercing gaze, as if fathoming her very heart, he looked down into her deep blue eyes. Unflinchingly, steadfastly, truthfully, and lovingly, they returned the gaze, and as she looked, just the word "true" fell softly from her lips.

Gradually a black cloud seemed to roll away from the old colonel's face, and his bent figure, once so stalwart and erect, appeared to regain a little of its old bearing.

"Now, God be praised," he said fervently. "Oh Clive! my own little one, had I seen guilt stamped on your brow my arm would still have been round you. But oh! what joy to clasp you to my heart, and to feel that you are my own pure little Clive, after I had thought you fallen and lost! Now, let Studholme Dorrien perjure his soul till hell yawns for him, and——"

"Don't, don't, darling," she screamed as she strained upward on tiptoe and placed her hand over his mouth.

He softened down at once.

"My child, you reproved me rightly. May God forgive me those words uttered at a time when my soul should have been full to overflowing with thankfulness to Him, and may He put it into my heart to forgive Studholme Dorrien."

"Don't think any wrong of him, darling; don't, don't. He believes me guilty of what he accuses me, vile and awful though it may be. If you had only seen his face, as I did, only heard the tones of his voice as I heard them, you would not think him guilty of perjury. He is mad—my poor darling Stud—and in his madness he believes it. His face and his voice on that awful morning, when he cast me away, haunt me day and night. I love him, darling, as fondly as ever. Don't, oh don't think any worse of him than that he is mad."

"I recollect, oh, with bitterness I recollect how more than once I have said, 'As Studholme Dorrien's wife, my daughter's happiness is built on a rock.' It was impious. I invited the Divine wrath, and He has shown me that what I, in my worldly short-sightedness, took for a rock has been a quicksand. Happiness! Ah, my once bright little Clive, sorrow and illness have indeed changed you."

"And you too, darling. Oh Daddles, what a broken-down old man you are now!"

"I was, Clive—not *now*—I am broken-down no longer. George Belmont and his little daughter against the whole world."

As he spoke, he strained her fondly to him, and stood up erect and defiant, as if daring calumny to do her worst.

"Daddles, what kept you all this time?"

"Worry and over-travel, my child, knocked me up, and I was ill at Brindisi for some time, too ill to move. But now I am well again, and never mind me, Clive. Come to your seat now, darling, you look faint. This has been too much

for you. Ah, what a sad tale of weakness and suffering these pillows tell."

"No, rather of kind, loving attention. Oh Daddles, you will love her so for all she has done for me. Such a dear, old-fashioned, affectionate little thing. If it hadn't been for her care and devotion I could not have lived."

"Yes, you told me in your letter. Where is she? where is she? Let me see her now. Let me not lose a moment in thanking her as she deserves."

The bell was rung, and Mary Ann was despatched for Miss Weevins.

Pale and trembling, the little woman obeyed the summons, which had been none the less startling because expected.

"Come here, darling," said Clive, reassuringly, as Miss Weevins stood at the door irresolute and shy. "No, Daddles, you stay here by me. Let *me* put her hands in yours."

The colonel was just on the point of striding forward with outstretched hand, when Clive restrained him.

"There, darling, as I place her hand in yours, let me tell you that she has been a sister, a sweet, loving, devoted sister to me in my trial. She saved my life."

Miss Weevins felt her hand grasped in a great muscular palm, and stood with downcast eyes.

"Were I to talk for a week, I could not express half the gratitude I feel," said the colonel, in tones so soft and tender that Miss Weevins gained sufficient courage to look up, and the face she then saw beaming down on her, in spite of its deep lines and its heavy grizzled moustache, was so gentle and kind, that she continued to look up into it.

"I owe you more than I can ever repay, and as long as life lasts you will have the holiest and innermost place in George Belmont's friendship. I thank you, from my soul, I thank you."

He drew her towards him and kissed her on the forehead. Not a word escaped Miss Weevins' lips. She gave

one look of gratitude, then kissed Clive, and hurried out of the room, to bury her head under her pillow.

The excitement was now telling on Clive's weak condition, and the colonel with tender solicitude leaned forward to arrange the pillows more comfortably.

"Daddles," she said, "let me sit once more in my old place on your knee, with my head on your shoulder. Nowhere else will I find such rest as there."

* * * * * *

Half through the night Clive lay in her old haven of rest, sometimes telling "Daddles" about what she had gone through, sometimes dozing softly. It was past midnight when he handed her over to Miss Weevins, and took his departure. He told her he was going back to his hotel for the remainder of the night; but two o'clock struck and the old colonel, with a cigar in his mouth, was still pacing up and down the opposite pavement, watching the room where his darling was sleeping.

Miss Weevins was also up into the small hours. She was too excited to go to bed, and throughout the night she sat hard at work taking the wretched Eustace Fitzwygram's arm off just below the shoulder.

"Ahem, dear me," soliloquised Miss Weevins, rather paradoxically, "it will add so much to his personal appearance—ahem!"

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### DAWN.

"DOLLY, old boy, here I am. I've travelled day and night since receiving your letter. It came to hand when I was far up the country, and I rode straight to the nearest seaport without even striking off to touch at my headquarters. These two saddle-bags represent the whole of my travelling-kit. Here's my great-coat—a blanket with a hole in the middle for the head, what's called a *poncho* in those parts; created rather a sensation, I fancy, at Waterloo Station. But I need not tell you any more. As old Falstaff said, 'This poor show doth better; it doth infer the zeal I had to see you.' And now, Dolly, what is it that I 'shall never forgive myself for as long as life lasts if I do not come home at once?' If, old friend, it is to help you out of a difficulty, as I have concluded it is, and I *have* arrived too late, you are quite right, I shall never forgive myself, though I have done my best to come to you. What is it? Out with it, old fellow. My hand, my head, my heart, my purse, everything that is mine is at your service."

The speaker was Studholme Dorrien. His face was bronzed by sun and wind; and constant exercise in the saddle and on foot—in that vain search after heart-rest—had drawn him as fine as a racehorse, and made him as hard as iron. He looked more self-reliant than ever.

"Dorrien," said Dolly, as he grasped his friend's hand, "thank God you have arrived! You're as hard as nails."

"Yes, I am, Dolly—hard as nails," he said in tones which almost seemed to have a metallic ring in them. "Capital sport out there; have to work for it, hard exercise, frugal living, pure air. Come out and get as hard as nails too, old fellow. Believe me, it's the best condition of mind and body to be in. I mean to return and finish the year out there at once; that is to say, as soon as I cease to be of any service to you. Come out with me, Dolly—do you all the good in the world. You look pale, and as nervous as a cat in a strange garret."

"Yes, there is a great deal at stake, Dorrien. You won't return to South America. It is nothing for myself that I want from you. Dorrien, your wife——"

"Dolly, if it's all the same to you, I shall prefer your not reminding me of that tie."

"Your wife is dying, Dorrien."

"Is she? I am sorry to hear it. She is probably not in a fit frame of mind. If you think it would afford her any consolation to be assured of my forgiveness, you're at liberty to convey the assurance to her. I myself cannot see her. I could not believe in even her death-bed repentance. Her soul is steeped in deceit."

"Stay—you have nothing to forgive her for," said Dolly, the colour mounting hotly to his cheeks. "She is as innocent of the charge you bring against her as the angels in heaven whom she will soon join."

"Dolly, you're an unmitigated ass. I am not, as you know, given to any violent ebullitions of temper; but if I thought that by shaking you by the collar until the teeth dropped out of your head, or by kicking you until my boot went to bits, I should shake any folly out of or kick any common sense into you, I'd try both. But your case is hopeless."

"I can prove her innocence, I tell you. The 'unmit-

gated ass' has found it all out, traced it step by step," said Dolly excitedly. "Listen——"

Dorrien, with a gesture, half friendly, half fierce, placed his hand on Dolly's shoulder and shook him.

"No, I won't listen. Look here. I told you once before, and I'll tell you but once again, and then" (this fiercely) "for ever after hold your tongue on this subject. I'll swear to you that, with my own eyes, in my sober senses, I saw her clinging to that card-cheating, horse-coping cad—clinging to him, sir, winding her arms about him to save him from me. And when the crowd rescued him from me and carried him off half dead to the cab where she had sat screaming all the time, she threw herself on him, wringing her hands——Bah! And you say you'll prove to me that she's innocent! Don't be a fool, Jones; for Heaven's sake shut up!"

"It was not your wife you saw. By Heaven it wasn't!" said Dolly, striking the table with his clenched fist and stamping his foot. "You never saw Clive Dorrien that morning until, half stunned and bleeding, she came back to her once happy home with her heart full of pure, true love for you."

Dorrien shrugged his shoulders contemptuously.

"And you have brought me all these thousands of miles over land and sea to tell me this? Have I come all this distance to hear that black is white, that night is day, that Clive Dorrien is pure?"

"Yes, I have. I have brought you that you may save her life, or, if too late, that you, you, yes *you*, may have *her* forgiveness before she dies."

"Oh come, all this is really the ravings of a lunatic. It's a case for personal restraint. I am sorry, Dolly, sincerely sorry that you should have gone mad over an affair of mine. I cannot do more than tell you I saw her, and seeing, my dear fellow, is believing, in spite of which you seem determined to go ramming that extremely soft head of yours

against an uncommonly hard brick-wall. I shall not deign to continue the childish altercation. We might go on for a week saying, like a couple of children, 'did'—'didn't,' over and over again; but let me at once nip this sort of thing in the bud. If I lie, there could be only one motive, that being dislike to my wife and a wish to break from her. Now, you know I'm not given to gushing. I was never what is called a popular man, for I always showed any dislike I felt. But though I always showed my dislike, I was not, somehow, equally open in showing my love.

"It was not in my nature to be always spooning. But, Dolly, I loved her none the less for that. I loved her all the deeper. I loved her, I tell you, with my whole heart and soul. In my eyes she was perfect. I would not have had one trait of character, one peculiarity, one little mannerism of hers altered. And when I found her out, never in this world was man's heart wrenched as mine was—and is. I went to South America, as you know, to try by change of scene, exercise, sport, and excitement, to get some peace of mind. I had a hardy lot of men with me, but I always walked or rode them down. Do what I would, though, I could not walk or ride down the demon gnawing at my heart. I could not wear *that* out, it was always there. They were a rough, lawless lot, but I was liked by them. I got popularity there, Dolly, amongst these fellows. And do you know why? Because when the camp-fire was lighted at night, I always kept watch while they snored. I could never sleep at such times. Sometimes during the day I would go off into a doze in the saddle, but I don't think since I saw you last I have slept for two consecutive hours in the night.

"I have felt the hot breath of a buffalo and the earth trembling under his furious headlong charge, and as I have pulled the trigger and sprung aside to avoid the huge moribund mass crashing to the ground, I've cursed—what do you think? I've cursed the futility of that and every other

attempt to find relief in excitement: even at such a moment, which, as far as I knew at the time, was probably my last, that gnawing at my heart was working as busily as ever. And now, Dolly, I appeal to that last glimmering of sense which may still flicker in your clouded brain, and I ask you is it possible that I can have invented the rigmarole story, broken my arm by way of colouring it—you saw it, you, know—just to inflict all this mental suffering on myself? Is it likely that I should have forged this bolt to destroy my own happiness? or if you take another line and say I'm mad, then it is a madness I shall die in. There—I have given you this peep into my feelings just to silence you. No more of it, Dolly, as you value my friendship, no more of it. Drop the subject now and for ever."

"Listen, Dorrien. I never dreamed——Give me a hearing. I gave you one, a patient and long one, though I was chafing all the time. I never dreamed for one moment that you ever stated anything but what you believed in your heart to be the fact. You thought you saw her, but——"

"You incorrigible lunatic, change the subject I tell you, change it, do you hear? or I leave you this moment and never see you again until I receive a written promise from you not to renew this."

"Hear me out, Dorrien. I have proofs of her innocence if you'll only listen——"

Dorrien rose abruptly as if to leave the room.

Dolly rushed to the door and placed his back to it.

"You must and shall listen. If you were to go away and learn afterwards, when too late, what I have to tell you now, the bitter gnawing you have told me of would be child's play to what your feelings would be then. You *shall* stay and listen to the proofs of her innocence, even if we come to blows over it. I should get the worst of that, I know, but you may hammer me to pieces before I'd stop. Dorrien, you *must hear* me."

The two confronted each other; Dolly with his back to the door, Dorrien in a menacing attitude.

"Look here, Dolly, I tell you I shall *not* listen. Do not let our friendship be blasted for ever. You exasperate me. Either drop the subject or stand aside and let me pass."

"Neither, Dorrien, neither."

"Stand aside, I tell you."

"Never, till you promise to hear me. You *shall* hear what I've got to say. Even if I have to hold on to your throat like a bulldog, I won't let you go till you hear me."

"I went to your bankers, and there I found——"

"For the last time stand aside!"

"For the last time, no!——and there I found——"

"Dolly, by our past friendship, and in God's name, spare me the pain of raising a hand to you. Will you drop the subject?"

"No."

"Will you stand aside?"

"No."

"Then on your own head be the consequences."

The next moment Dorrien's powerful grasp was on the collar of Dolly's coat.

So unequal to the strain, however, was the texture of the garment that the whole collar came off bodily with Dorrien's wrench; and, instead of being swung a helpless heap into the opposite corner of the room, Dolly remained with his back planted against the door, while Dorrien, with the angry flush fast fading out of his bronzed face, held the tattered remnant in his hand.

"Poor old Dolly," thought Dorrien with a sudden revulsion of feeling, "in a garret, and a madman, I believe!"

"Dolly," he said aloud, "forgive me, old man. Now, if I humour you, and let you have your say, will you promise me on your honour never to revert to it again?"

"Yes, I'll promise you that."

"Have you anything to smoke? I've nothing about me."

"Let me, at all events," thought Dorrien, "have something to soothe me while I listen to the wanderings of a maniac."

"Yes, there's a pipe and tobacco on the mantelpiece."

"An old clay and a screw of shag tobacco!" mentally observed Dorrien. "Poor old Dolly! Scented latakia, like one of Ouida's heroes, used to be his style."

"Now, Dolly," said Dorrien, as he lit up, "go on, and for Heaven's sake cut it short."

* * * * * *

That pipe was never finished. The fire glowed halfway down the bowl when it was dashed into the grate, and Dorrien sprang to his feet.

"Take me to this man. Let me hear his story. Oh merciful God, if this all turns out to be true! Let us go without a moment's delay."

Like a child, the impetuous, proud man followed Dolly out of the room.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### AN OLD SOLDIER'S STORY.

THE two were soon seated in a hansom, and rapidly proceeding through the crowded streets. Their route lay over Westminster Bridge; then to the right, down into the purlieus of Lambeth.

"What's the matter, I wonder?" said Dolly, as the cabman, under his direction, drew up opposite a small house in a narrow street. Loitering about, gaping at the house and at everyone who came out or went in, was a low, dissipated-looking crowd, and at the door stood a couple of policemen, warning off the more adventurous and inquisitive spirits.

"No admittance, except for those with any business inside," said the policeman, placing a debarring arm across the doorway.

"But we have business. I know Mr. Potts well, and have some pressing business with him. What's the matter?"

"Drownded," was the reply. "Young woman drownded herself night afore last; picked up off Lambeth Stairs yesterday mornin'! Jury just been viewin' the body."

With a sickening at their hearts, Dolly and Dorrien passed into the narrow little passage. Loud weeping and a voice of lamentation filled the house.

"Oh Liz, Liz! Oh, my darlin' little Liz! I can't believe it's you, always larfin' and so bright, lyin' there stiff an' cold. Oh, speak to me, Liz, Liz! you can't be dead.

This ain't you. No, you're a angel in Heaven harkenin' to your poor Milly. Oh Liz, Liz!"

They made their way to the room whence these heart-rending words proceeded.

Seated on the floor beside a low bed, and rocking herself backwards and forwards in an ecstasy of woe, was the utterer of the above, a stout girl whom the reader has met before—Milly Pounceby; and on the bed, dank and lifeless, lay the once merry, saucy little Liz, the pride and delight of the work-room at the back of the military embroiderer's shop. In a corner of the room, in silent grief, his head buried between his hands, through which the tears trickled, was an old man with a wooden leg.

As Dorrien glanced at the bed, he started and turned ashy pale.

"Good God, Dolly!" he whispered, as he seized his friend by the arm with a fierce grip, "and you say that is not Clive——?"

"No, no; thank God!"

Dorrien remained rooted to the spot where he stood, gazing with a fixed stare of horror and amazement at the death-stamped face of little Liz.

Either too wrapped in their grief, or else connecting the sounds of voices and footsteps with the ghastly ceremony of viewing the body which had just taken place, the two mourners did not notice the visitors.

"Oh, this is just retribootion, as the garrison chaplain used to talk on," groaned the old man with the wooden leg.

"Mr. Potts," said Dolly, going up to him and touching his arm, "pray excuse our intrusion into this room. I cannot tell you how shocked and grieved I am by this awful occurrence."

"Oh, it's you, sir, is it? You've a sort o' right to be here, sir. Bless you! Oh, ain't it awful? And this is the gentleman you've told me about? Your hand, sir. I'm

only an old soldier and you was an orficer, but let me shake the hand as nigh shook the breath out of that scoundrel."

"Oh Liz, Liz!" here broke in the girl. "How well I mind the time when you first seen him. Oh, if I could only 'a' looked into his black heart, I'd 'a' tore it out, if I'd been hanged for it the next minute."

"Her friend, sir—a good gurl as ever lived is Milly. They was like sisters, them two. Leastways, in love and bein' always together, I mean, for no one I ever see was like little Liz in the matter o' looks and perty ways. Oh Liz! and the last time I ever spoke to you they was harsh words. She com'd home day before yesterday, sir. 'Father,' she says, 'father,' she says, stretchin' out her little hands, 'I've come——'"

A burst of passionate sobbing here broke from the old man.

"'Father,' she says," he continued with the tears streaming down his cheeks, "'I've com'd home,' she says, 'for there ain't no place like home, no love like a father's. He's deceived me,' she says, 'the marriage was a make-believe, and my heart's a-breakin'. Oh father, kiss me.' And what did I do?" repeated the old man in a scream, as he almost dashed his wooden leg through the floor. "I spoke harsh to her. I didn't feel harsh. God knows I didn't; but I spoke harsh because I thought it was my dooty. 'Take off them fal-lals and finery,' I says, 'take 'em off.' Without a word and only just one sweet look, she goes and does as I bid her. She goes up to her room and puts on her little dress as she used to work in——"

Another fit of violent sobbing here again interrupted the narrative for some moments.

"While she's up in her room I goes out to fetch Milly there. Good gurl, Milly, as ever breathed. I goes to her sobbin' with j'y because she'd com'd back; and I says, 'Milly, it's all along o' what I considered my dooty and for her good that I didn't throw my arms around her. My

heart was burstin' to, and there warn't a drop o' anger in it. But,' I says, 'you come along o' me, Milly, and you make believe to her that you've got over me, and I've forgiven her.' And we cries together, does Milly and me, to think we'll have her again to ourselves. And we comes here . . . There ain't no Liz, only a bit of a letter full o' love and saying we'd meet in heaven. The next time I sets eyes on her she's brought in by the river-perlice, as you see her now. Oh Liz, Liz !"

He here again buried his head in his hands, and there was a silence of some moments.

"And now, would one o' you gen'l'men say a bit of a prayer for me?" he said, looking up. "I know it's only what's in the heart that's looked to, but I *should* like a prayer said by all of us kneeling together around her. We're all, high and low, mixed up in this here sad piece o' work."

"You say a few words, Dorrien," said Dolly; "it's more your place than mine."

"Hold on a bit, please sir, till I onstraps my wooden leg. I can't kneel down till I takes it off. You see, the leg was took off above the knee-jint. That's why I ain't been much of a church-goer, or I might 'a' been a deal better. One can't be always strappin' and onstrappin', and it ain't seemly to sing praises standin' on one leg like a pelikin. Now, sir, if you please, I'm quite ready. Let it be something straight from the heart, sir, made up on the moment."

Prayer had not often stirred Studholme Dorrien's proud, stubborn heart, but now it was strangely softened, and as they all knelt together round little Liz, he offered up a few appropriate and touching words of supplication.

"Thankee, sir, thankee," said the old man as they rose from their knees, and he commenced strapping on his leg again, "I feels a bit comforted now. The words was real beautiful, and just what was in my heart."

"We have not much time to spare now," said Dorrien;

"I wish to hear from your own lips the story you've told my friend here."

"Willin'ly, sir, willin'ly. It's my dooty to do everythin' in my power to set this business right. It's all along o' me it was ever wrong."

He led them away from the chamber of death into a homely little sitting-room, and as soon as they were seated he commenced his story.

"Just afore the Indian Mutiny broke out, sir, me and my missus was with my regiment in Bengal. We had one little child, only one, a little gurl, Elizabeth, or 'Liz,' as we called her. We was wrapped up in that child, sir. We had had children afore, but we was always unfortunate and lost 'em. You see, sir, soldiers sees a deal o' bad climates, and what the old 'uns pull through the young 'uns don't. We cotton'd to this little Liz, that is, sir, our hearts was drawed to her more than to the others. We'd knowd what it was to lose 'em, and the dread of losin' her made us all the fonder, I think. My missus was always speakin' of when my time for a pension would be up, and we'd come home to the old country and keep a little shop, or take in washin', or mind a gate, or do somethink which with my pension would keep a comf'able home for little Liz, and bring her up with a bit more eddication than her parents got. But that wasn't to be, sir, that wasn't to be. I hadn't more'n a year to put in for my pension on discharge, and the regiment was down in a precious hot and onhealthy station, when little Liz, she wasn't more'n three years then, got pale and wouldn't play about. She got paler and palerer, and the surgeon said she couldn't stand the climate, and she'd go like the rest. Now, I had been, in England and in the Mediterranean, servant to the colonel since the time when he'd been only a cap'en, and only for there bein' no soldier servants allowed in India, I'd a been his servant then, and my missus had done his washin'. A real good 'un, he was,

and always ready to do both of us a turn. My missus goes to him and she says : 'Oh sir,' she says, 'our little Liz is a-dyin' by inches, afore our very eyes. Potts can't be invalided home, for Potts,' she says, 'is as strong as a norse and ain't been in norsespittle since he 'listed, and there ain't no draft goin' to England, or I might get a passage and take Liz. Oh sir,' she says, 'the only thing for us to do is to get up to the hills and far away, where it's a bit cooler. Give Potts two months' furlough, sir, and we'll take her up and save her, and by the time the furlough's up the bad season will be over down here. Potts has got a bit o' money in the Regimental Savings Bank, what we've laid up for Liz, but if we stay here another month there won't be no Liz to save for. We can pay our way, sir ; let us go. Help us to save her,' she says, 'by giving Potts the furlough.' 'Mrs. Potts,' he makes answer, 'it's agin the reg'lations to give soldiers furlough in this country, but it's a hard case, a precious hard case, and there ain't no rule without a exception. I'll make it all square. Take yer child, you and Potts, and with God's blessin' save her.' God's blessin' rest on *him*, says I. He not only tells her this, but he shoves a bag o' fifty rupees into her hand, 'towards the travellin' expenses,' he says. Well, sir, we goes up, travels for about ten days and nights in a bullock bandy, and the higher we gets above the plains the brighter the colour comes back into little Liz's cheeks, and she soon comes some of her old gambols. It was j'y, sir, j'y ondescrible, for us to see her. We stayed up at this place until little Liz seemed to 'a laid in a stock o' health that would last her until my time was up, and we should come home. You never see anythin' pick up like that ther' little child. She was on the frisk the 'ole time we was up. Well, sir, I must draw it a bit shorter, and come to the pint, for I see you're in a hurry. We started to rejine the regiment, and it happened just to be the time when the Mutiny first broke out, and the news of it was runnin' thro' the country like wildfire.

"As we passed through the villages the people looked at us with scowls, and at last we was forced to give the villages a wide berth. We had four natives with us. Three of 'em was good 'uns; the other was a sulky, high-caste sort of a chap, and been getting more'n more cheeky as we picked up news of the goin's on at Cawnpore, and them other places. One day, when we was on the halt, he pint blank refused to do somethink, and I fetched him a crack with a bit of a bamboo I'd got in my hand. On this he outs with a knife, and if I hadn't got him by the wrist, he'd 'a' slapped it into me. He salaams a bit then, and axes in his lingo for pardon; and as I couldn't go holdin' him by the wrist till we gets to the end of our journey, I lets him go. All day he keeps his eyes on me, a-scowlin' and a-mutterin' to himself; and late in the afternoon, when it was gettin' cool, and I was havin' my pipe, and my old 'ooman she was havin' a bit of a sleep in the bandy, and little Liz was playin' about in the shade picking flowers, all on a suddent the black devil he creeps round by the trees, and pounces on the little innocent babby. He gives a yell at me, and afore I can get up to him his knife is in little Liz's heart, and he makes off into the woods with a mockin' larf. My wife, she——but, sir, there ain't no use, nor there ain't no time, to go talkin' on it. We buries little Liz, and we journeys on with breakin' hearts; and the farther we goes the more dangerous it gets. The three chaps with us, they was right good, they was; and if it hadn't been for them we'd never 'a' got along. They got us native clothes, and gave us some juice to stain our faces and hands with, and by keeping oursel's to oursel's nobody said nothink to us. One morning, just arter daybreak, we was going on, when we sees comin' along in the distance a man and a woman, quarrellin' together. He kep on makin' snatches at a great bundle she carried in her arms, and she'd turn away and hold it to her as if it was somethink precious. They was so hard at it, he a-hollerin' and clawin' at her, and she

a-screamin' and givin' it him with her tongue—just for all the world as if they was white folks—that they didn't see us till we was right on top of 'em; and then the woman she wrapped up her bundle and tried for to hide what she'd got inside. I was walkin' alongside the bandy, and my wife was inside, cryin', as usual, after little Liz, when she whispers: 'Potts,' she says, 'it's a infant, a English infant, I do believe, what she's got there. Save it, Potts! save it! I hear it cryin'.' My mind was made up in an instant. 'Don't be surprised at nothink I does,' I whispers. The woman she tries to push on with her bundle, but her husband he holds her back and tells us of the white child she's draggin' about and undootifully objectin' to his killin' of it. While he's a-talkin' and she's a-saying somethink to the other men, I creeps round to her side and snatches the bundle right out of her arms, and I runs right away, brandishin' a knife and a-yellin' as I seed the black devil do what killed our little Liz. She screams and tries for to follow me, but her husband holds her back, and larfs when he sees me pretend to stick the knife into the bundle, as much as to say, that's azackly what I intended doin' myself. She kicks up a terrible rumpus, and my missus she rams a darnin' needle into the bullocks and makes 'em travel, and they soon overtakes me. The woman struggles hard to come after, but her husband drags her off by the hair of her head and a-beatin' her with a stick, just as if they was both in the enj'yment o' the blessin's o' civilisation, and we sees nothing more of 'em, though we hear her givin' tongue for a mile a'most.

"Such a little angel it was, a little gurl just the age of our little Liz. My wife she was a bit off her head, I think, with grief, and a bit of a methody into the bargain, and she declared as how this blessed infant was sent by Heaven to comfort us for the loss of our poor little Liz. It did nothink but cry for the first few days, and lisp out some babby talk about its 'pa' and its 'ma,' and somethink about some 'un

she called 'Kive,' I think it was. But arter a bit it took to me and my wife, and our hearts they clung around the purty little creetur with its yaller curls and blue eyes, and by the time we arrived at our journey's end it was like our own child. You see, sir, what with dodgin' and hidin' and makin' what they calls 'daytours'—though why I don't know for they was mostly made by night—we was a precious long time gettin' back, and when we arrives we find the regiment had taken the field, and the women and children had all been sent down to Calcutta. I reports myself at the adjutant-general's office, and I am attached to a regiment which is just on the point of follerin' mine, and my wife with the child, which we passes off as our own, is sent down to Calcutta with a lot o' other women and children. Little Liz, she cried when I left 'em as if I'd been her own father. We called her that name, sir, for there was somethink in it very sweet to our ears, and me and my old missus we a'most looked upon her as our own little Liz com'd back to us. I think the old 'ooman did altogether. 'The Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh away, and the Lord giveth back again, if so be as He pleaseth, and blessed be the name o' the Lord,' she'd say, as she'd hug the little gurl to her with her heart overflowin'.

"Well, sir, I begs pard'n. I can't help drawin' it a bit long, but I'll try and break into double time, as I see you're in a hurry. There ain't no one, I think, so long-winded as a old soldier. We took the field, sir. There was my regiment, and the regiment I went up along with, and your old corps under Colonel Belmont, all in the same brigade. About the camp there was notices stuck offerin' a reward o' 5,000 rupees—a fortun', sir, a matter o' five hundred pound—to anyone as 'ud give information leadin' to the discovery o' Colonel Belmont's little child, a little gurl supposed to have been stole away by her *ayah*. There was a description of the child and of the clothes she'd got on, and when I read all I seed with a glistenin' eye that it was the little

gurl, the sweet little maid as we'd saved and what was as dear to our hearts now as if we was its own parents. I was in a terrible quandary over it. I know'd my dooty was then and there, reward or no reward, to go straight to Colonel Belmont's tent and tell him where his child was. But I didn't. God forgive me, I didn't. I *couldn't*. I thought o' the old 'ooman, and I couldn't. I thought o' the litttle child with its yaller curls and its lispin' babby talk, what had crep straight into the hole our own little Liz had left in my heart, and filled it right up, and I couldn't give her up. Colonel Belmont's regiment bein' in the same brigade, I goes into their lines, and begins talkin' about this reward, and I picks up from the men that he had got another little gurl left, just the same as the one I had; that they was twins, and as like one to t'other as two regimental buttons, so that you could hardly 'a' told which was which; and they says, 'he's made up his mind to the worst,' they says, 'and he don't now expect ever to see nothink more of her.' 'How should he?' they says, 'for o' course the poor little creetur's been scragged long ago, that's sartin sure.'

"I comes back from hearin' all this more'n ever unwillin' to give up little Liz, for I says, he's got one left to comfort him just the same, and he's now got over the worst o' the sorrer. After a time, sir, we comes in for a bit o' fightin', and wherever we meets 'em we always licks 'em easy. One day, sir, well I mind it, we comes across 'em in force, they was about ten to one of us. We was draw'd up in line o' contigu's columns, and their guns opened fire. 'The brigade will depl'y into line,' hollers out the brigadier, and we deplies into line; then up comes a staff-officer gallopin' to our colonel. 'The line's to advance, sir,' he says, 'covered by two o' your companies skirmishin'.' Out we goes in extended order, numbers one and two companies. I was in number one. Our cap'en was a smart 'un. 'Now then,' he says, 'don't waste yer fire, my men. Give it 'em hot when you've got a chance, but don't go blazin' away until yer pretty sure

o' hittin'; and aim low,' he says; 'a rackershay on the targate,' he says, 'don't count, but a rackershay in a man's legs ain't a bad thing to stop 'im fightin', and's better than goin' a foot or two over his head.' We goes on steadily advancin', without firin' a shot, though there was a few of us bein' hit every now and then. But at last the 'commence firing' sounds, and we begins pop-pop-popping and advancin' steadily. I never see them devils so plucky as they was that day. There was an advance along their whole line. 'The "Retire" has sounded from the main body, sir,' says the colour-sergeant to the cap'en. 'Has it?' says the cap'en, 'I got a bad ear for music,' he says, and we continues advancin'. Lor' bless 'ee, sir, Lor' bless 'ee, it was like Nelson puttin' the telescope up to his blind eye and saying he couldn't see the 'Recall.' He warn't much more'n a boy, was the cap'en, ay, and a spry lad he was, always a jokin' and up to larks. 'Blaze away now, my boys,' he hollers, 'yer can't miss 'em now!' Them was the last words the young cap'en ever says. He was shot clean through the heart the next minute, and the best thing could 'a' happened to him, too; for if he'd 'a' lived nothink could 'a' saved him from bein' court-martial'd for disobedience o' orders. We gives a sort o' yell o' rage when we sees the cap'en fall, and them as is loaded downs on the knee——"

For the last minute the old soldier, with flashing eyes and excited gestures, had been issuing words of command, or picking off mutinous sepoys with his stick, and it was only when his wooden leg brought him up with a round turn in an attempt to drop down on one knee in skirmishing order that he was recalled to the present.

"What a old fool, what a old fool," he said as he sank back into his chair. "There ain't no fool like a old fool, and there ain't no old fool like a old soldier fightin' his battles agin. Oh Liz, Liz, if I didn't go forgettin' all about you lyin' there upstairs!" The eyes which a moment before had been flashing were now dim with tears; the figure

which had been drawn up erect as if once more on parade was now drooping, and the voice just uplifted in words of command were now raised in bitter lamentation.

"Well, sir," he resumed, "I shan't keep yer much longer as I see yer frettin' to go. To make a long story short, I gets a bullet in my knee-jint, a smashin' the bones as if a tiger had been crunchin' of it. I was took off after a bit to the field 'orspittle, just a marquee they'd rigged up under some trees, and laid down with a lot o' others. There was a good bit o' groanin', ay, and sometimes screechin' goin' on as the doctors was probin' and cuttin'. We had had sharp work that mornin', and the tent was full, and the doctors was goin' about with their sleeves tucked up like butchers. I was layin' groanin' with my knee-jint swelled up the size o' my head, when Colonel Belmont comes in very white and with his right arm all bleedin' and hangin' down. He'd been hit early in the mornin', but he wouldn't leave the field till the fightin' was all over and we'd licked them beggars. 'Anywhere'll do,' he says, 'here's a empty place next this fine feller,' he says, comin' and sittin' hisself beside me. 'Badly hit, my man?' he says. I couldn't hardly look him in the face; I turned around and groaned, partly with the pain in my knee, partly with the prickins o' conscience. 'Poor feller,' he says, 'poor feller,' and him all the time nigh as bad as me! After a bit it com'd to my turn. 'There, my man, take hold o' that,' says the doctor, givin' me a bit of a leather strap, a piece of old artillery harness it was, 'and don't you scream out if yer can help it; it has a bad effeck on the young soldiers,' he says. I know'd what was comin'. I puts the strap atween my teeth and bites it while they probes for the bullet. Oh Lor', oh Lor'! the werry thought o't sets my wooden leg a shootin'. I bit through the strap, sir, but I didn't holler. You see, sir, it was a doctor from a strange corps or I think I might a let out once or twice, and there was Colonel Belmont, too, of another regiment close by, though I dare say he warn't

attendin' much to me; he had a doctor at him at the same time. The doctor what had been at me calls another to him, and they looks at my leg together, and they shakes their heads. 'Can't save it,' says one. 'It must come off just about here, I think,' says t'other, puttin' his finger on my leg, just like a butcher when he says to a old lady buyin' a sirline, 'just about 'ere, mum, yer'll find a nice cut I think.' Not that they was onkind, not a bit of it; they was just t'other way. I ain't ashamed to say, sir, when I heard them my heart com'd up in my mouth and nigh stopped beatin' altogether. I turned sick all over; and I didn't seem to have no pain in my leg then. It was like ringin' a dentist's bell when you've got a tooth-ache. I didn't mind fightin'. I warn't afeard o' the bullets and the shells when they was whizzin' and shriekin' about, but I *did* funk being strapped down on that barrack bed-board, as I know'd I should be, and which was leanin' up agin the tent pole, and I could see, by the red stains on it, it had already been used for the puppus. I wished I'd been killed outright. 'There ain't no more chlorerform left than what'll do for one more case, and I'm a-going to give that to Colonel Belmont,' says one doctor, him as was the senior, in a whisper. But I heard him. My senses was that worked up I heard him every word, for all his whisperin'. 'Colonel,' he says, goin' up and speaking low, 'we've had such a run the last few days on the chlorerform that there's only just enough for your case.' 'An' what's this fine feller a-goin' to do,' says Colonel Belmont, pintin' to me. 'Poor feller,' says the doctor, 'he'll have to go on without; he's a strong hale subjeck and will undergo it all right. Besides, colonel, you was wounded earlier in the day and your operation will take place fust.' How well I rec'lects every word. 'Ah, but he was brought in here afore me. Fust come, fust served. Give it to him, give it to him,' says the colonel, in his sharp way o' speakin'. 'His business is a worse and a longer one than mine; give it to him, poor feller, he'll want it more'n me.' 'Werry

well, colonel,' says the doctor; 'yer wishes 'll be attended to.' I couldn't say no more'n 'God bless you, sir,' to the colonel, as I gives him a sort of salute lyin' down. It was risin' from my heart to say, 'I've got yer child, sir, I've got her; take her; send for her.' But I didn't speak the words, God forgive me! and you can quite fancy, sir, if I didn't speak them words *then*, I warn't likely to ever afterwards. I thought o' the poor old missus when she'd wished me good-bye, and how she'd said, 'Potts,' she said, 'we've had hard times and good times together, but in sorrow and in joy, old man, we've al'ays stood by each other. Yer a-goin' to fight, Potts, for your country; don't let one thought o' me, left all alone to mourn for yer,' she said, her brown, honest face all a-twitching, 'don't let one thought o' me, old man, keep yer back, when the enemy's in front o' yer. Do yer dooty, Potts; go and fight like a English soldier, and if yer killed, my poor old man,' she said, sobbin' and layin' her head up agin my shoulder, 'I'll have this blessed babby to comfort me, and I'll teach her to pray that we may all meet again!' As I thought o' all this, and how it was very likely in that there climate I'd not get over havin' my leg took off, I swallowed the words I'd ought to 'a' spoken. I swallowed 'em. I couldn't get 'em out, I couldn't deprive the poor old missus o' the only comfort she'd have in the world. Well, sir, thanks to Colonel Belmont, I had the chlorerform, and through that there blessed inwention I didn't know nothink o' what was goin' on until it was all over, and my leg was actooaly took off to the toon o' the 'Lincolnshire Poachers.' It was our regimental quick step, out o' compliment to our colonel, who was a Lincolnshire man, and they told me afterwards I kept on singin' it the whole time.

"You must bear with a old man, sir, when he's talkin' o' old times. I keeps quite forgettin' how precious yer time is. I shan't keep yer a minute longer. There ain't much more to be told. As soon as I was well enough, I was sent

down to Calcutta and shipped aboard, together with my missus and little Liz, for England. I never told the old 'ooman about findin' out Liz's father, but she didn't live long to enj'y our home in England, what we'd al'ays been dreamin' of. She died afore we'd been back a year; and if I loved that there little Liz afore my old 'ooman died, I loved her ten times more arterwards. I brought her up, o' course, as my own child, lovin' her more an' more every day, and she never knowed but what I was her own father, and, loved me accordin'. You knows all the rest, sir. This gentleman have of course told yer how he happened to go to yer bankers to make some inquiries about you, and how he saw this villain there makin' arrangements for Mrs. Dorrien, as he said was with him, to receive her money, and how he never lost sight o' him till he traced him to where little Liz was a livin' with him as his lawful wife, as she thought then. There, sir, there, I've made a clean breast of it.

"And now, sir," concluded the old soldier, as he leaned forward in his chair with an anxious look in his dim eyes; "which is it to be, 'Potts, you onmittergated scoundrel, you deserves hangin',' or 'Potts, my poor old feller, I pities you'?"

"The last, most certainly," said Dorrien, wringing the poor old man's hand. "I forgive you from the bottom of my heart, no matter what further miserable results there may be in store for us."

"It's a precious sight o' comfort to hear that from you, sir. Do you think Colonel Belmont can ever forgive me? I *should* like his forgiveness afore I says 'Here' to the last roll-call."

"Tell him your story as you have told it to us," said Dorrien, "and I'll stake my life on it that he'll forgive you."

"God bless you, sir! God bless you both! Good-bye, sir, good-bye, sir."

"And now, Dolly," said Dorrien, with a yearning look in his face and an unusual tremor in his tone, "take me to her. Let *me* now ask for forgiveness, miserable dupe that I have been! I thought myself a knowing fellow, Dolly, but that scoundrel has walked round me, turned both my flanks, pierced my centre, carried the very position I deemed the most inaccessible—my trust in Clive; while you, dear old friend, at whom this very day I have been hurling hard names by the score, have quietly outflanked the enemy that outflanked me."

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### SNATCHED FROM THE GRAVE.

In a bright-looking little house, sheltered from the cold north and east winds by the Ventnor cliffs, Clive Dorrien, with her old father and Miss Weevins, is dragging out what the doctor says are the last few weeks of her existence.

The old colonel is bowed down with grief, and Miss Weevins, from constant watching, anxiety, and sorrow, looks as if she will soon follow her tenderly-loved little friend.

Though an English January day, the sun shines so brightly and warmly over the calm, sparkling sea into the room where Clive lies, that the window is open, and the gentle breeze fans her pale cheeks and plays with her soft golden hair.

She is lying on an invalid's couch, and seated by her side, her hand in his, is her father.

"Darling," says Clive. "I could have gone on sorrowing for Stud and still not have given way, and have lived for your sake. But it was that illness, darling, that made me so weak, and I couldn't get back my strength. Don't think, oh, never think, darling old Daddles, that my love for you and the happiness of being with you would not have been enough to sustain me against even the loss of my poor Stud."

"No, no, my child. I don't think anything of the sort," says the colonel in a broken voice.

"I want you to promise me something, Daddles."

"Only say what it is, my child."

"If ever you meet Stud when I'm gone, darling, I want

you to promise me that you'll go up to him and shake his hand and be friends with him, and not harbour in your heart a single thought against him. It does pain me so to think that the two beings I love best on earth, the two beings that I look upon as the truest and noblest I shall leave behind me, will be estranged from each other."

"Clive, there is nothing in my power which I will refuse you. I will be ready to go up to Dorrien, if ever I meet him, and will even seek him out and shake his hand, but to be able to cleanse my heart of all bitterness towards him, my child, can be done only by earnest prayer to God Almighty. That that prayer shall be offered up, morning and evening, until it be heard, I promise you, my darling."

She presses his hand, and looks lovingly into his face. "You will always be a help and a friend to her," she says, glancing through the open window at Miss Weevins, who is out in the garden picking a few winter roses and other hardy flowers. "Take care of her, Daddles; she *will* sit up night after night, whatever I say, and she looks dreadfully delicate."

"She shall share my home, darling, wherever I may be, if she will, and when I go she shall be placed far above want or dependence for the rest of her life."

"There is poor old Dolly, darling Daddles——"

A sad little smile creeps for a moment into the wan face as she mentions the name. To her childhood and girlhood, Dolly was ever a sort of tender joke.

"Never lose sight of him, Daddles. I cannot understand him at all now. For the last month we have scarcely seen anything of him, and before that he became so strange and excitable in his manner. It's no use, darling, trying to find out about his affairs. I tried to, and it seemed to pain him, so that the kindest thing is to let him alone on that subject. But perhaps indirectly and delicately you may be able to do something. At all events try and keep dear old Dolly in sight."

"I look upon Jones as the simplest-hearted and purest-minded man I ever met," says the colonel. "But I only

found out his worth long after you did. As a child you always liked him more than anyone else you knew, and my child's friend is mine as long as there is breath in this body."

Here enters Miss Weevins with a bouquet of flowers for Clive, and as she places them in the thin hand, she says, "He-he!"

Miss Weevins' tender heart bleeds night and day, but she always tries to appear cheerful before Clive, and her sole idea of doing this is to say "he-he" at intervals as if she had got a joke somewhere. It is a feeble laugh, however, so decidedly, so palpably on the wrong side of her mouth, that it could never take in even an infant.

Clive only looks her thanks. She has been talking beyond her strength, and lies back exhausted.

The colonel rises and beckons Miss Weevins out of the room.

"He-he!" says Miss Weevins as she follows him, wiping her eyes. "She is weaker to-day than she has ever been," he says as they gain an adjoining room.

The veins are knotted on his forehead, and his whole frame shakes in his agony.

"She has been speaking as if giving me her parting injunctions. My child, my child is passing away from me—she is passing away."

Later in the day she is laid in her bed, the snow-white curtains of which are hardly whiter than her face. The colonel sits by her side, her hand in his. They don't speak, but every now and then there is an interchange of gentle pressure between the two hands, the great, rough, knotted, and the thin, white, little one.

For hours she has not spoken, but just as Miss Weevins, who has been sitting in a corner of the room silently crying, is creeping round to the other side of the bed to gaze on the white face, Clive with suddenly-bestowed strength raises herself up from the pillows, and, pushing her hair from her brow with a wild gesture, exclaims, "Daddles, Daddles! I feel—I feel as if Stud were near!"

Her lips are parted, a bright spot of colour rises to each cheek, and her eyes gleam lustrously.

Miss Weevins clasps her hands in despair, and the colonel in broken accents invokes Divine assistance. "Now, God give me strength to say, 'Thy will be done,'" he exclaims.

The supreme moment, they think, has come, and this is that last flicker of strength which so often immediately precedes dissolution.

A ring at the front-door bell sounds through the quiet house.

"Go, go," says Clive wildly to Miss Weevins, "see who it is."

Miss Weevins rushes out of the room, and after a few moments, which seem hours to Clive, she reappears.

"It's Mr. Jones. He has come down to see how she is, and he wishes to speak to you, colonel," she says in tremulous tones, and she then hurriedly retires as if to escape Clive's anxious queries.

"Go, darling, quick, quick," says Clive. "It's dear old Dolly; he has brought my darling to me. I feel he has, dear old friend!"

During the colonel's absence, Clive continues sitting up and waiting with feverish longing.

In a few minutes he returns, strangely agitated.

"My darling, can you bear the shock of sudden news?"

"Yes, yes, what is it? If Stud is dead, then I shall soon follow him. If he is alive and here, then joy never kills."

"He is alive, my darling. He is here."

The door is opened, and on the threshold, a humbled, trembling suppliant for pardon, stands Studholme Dorrien.

"Stud! oh my own darling!" rings through the house in a thrilling shriek, and two wasted little arms are outstretched to the figure in the doorway.

In an instant they are round his neck.

"Clive, my own *true*, noble little wife, can you forgive me?"

"Forgive you, Stud! you need not ask, darling, for what I've never withheld."

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### MORE LIGHT ON DARKNESS.

As the fish gasping out its life on a bank will recover if thrown back into its native element, or as the caged bird fretting itself to death in its captivity will soon break into song if allowed once more to soar upward in the sunny air, so did Clive Dorrien, in the blissful enjoyment of the love she had deemed lost for ever, rapidly pass from the very shadow of death towards life and strength.

The whole story of Garstang's diabolical plot; how he had used Clive's innocent and lost sister as an unconscious instrument of his revenge, was told to the colonel, and Dorrien was at once reinstated in that high position he had previously held in the old colonel's estimation. Freely, too, did he forgive old Potts when he had heard his rough, unvarnished tale; and the two maimed old soldiers, in amity and common sorrow, stood side by side at the grave of little Liz.

This sad episode they kept from Clive at first. They merely told her that the innocent tool in the hands of Garstang had been some person possessing a strange and accidental resemblance to herself. Thus Clive's cup of joy had not a drop of bitterness in it, and deeply did the thirsting soul drink of the refreshing draught.

For her benefit they all remained at Ventnor, and one day, about a fortnight after Dorrien's arrival, on Clive returning from a drive in a pony-carriage with her husband,

she was astonished to find Miss Weevins' unassuming luggage—a small hair trunk, a worsted-worked bag, and a reticule—arranged in a modest little pyramid in the hall. Attached to each article was a carefully-written label, informing all whom it concerned that "Miss Weevins" was a "passenger to London *viâ* Ryde and Portsmouth," and setting forth her destination in full. In addition to this information each label bore on its surface a blister or two, as if it had been plentifully watered by tears.

"What's the meaning of this?" exclaimed Clive. "Stud, carry me up to her room, quick."

In a few moments Clive was deposited at Miss Weevins' door, which, in her excitement, she entered without any ceremony.

"He-he!" said Miss Weevins, at her old deep tricks again, as she raised her head from her pillow, where she had been indulging in a good cry, "he-he! dear me."

"What on earth are you going to do? Why are you packed up?" asked Clive.

Miss Weevins tried the cheerful imposture again, but the "he-he" suddenly changed into a dismal "boo-hoo."

"You are now getting strong," she said, "and have all you love round you. I have no right here now. I can be of little use, so I am going back to Mrs. Crump's. I could not stand the idea of wishing you good-bye, and I had begun a farewell letter to you, but you have come back sooner than I expected."

"How could you ever think of doing such a thing? Are you tired of me? Have I shown I'm tired of you?"

"Oh no! oh no!"

"Has my father or has Stud ever in one single look, act, or word, made you think you're an intruder?"

"Oh no, no; they are both so kind and good. Kinder and better than I deserve."

"Then why were you thinking of going? Don't you like living with me?"

"Oh, don't ask such a thing. My idea of happiness in this world is being near you, and I can't tell you how I dreaded going back to my desolate life again. It would seem more desolate now than ever. But I felt I had no right here, and no right to expect anything more from you than that you would sometimes come and see me and let me go to see you."

"Why," said Clive, putting her arm round the timid, shrinking little body, and speaking with her cheek softly placed against her face, "do you know what Daddles has gone up to town for this very day?"

"On some kind, thoughtful mission, I'm sure."

"He has gone up to town to do something for you."

"For *me?*"

"Yes, you know I'm getting so strong now, and we're going up soon to the dear little house Daddles gave us when we were married. We shall all be so happy there, and there are two such bright little rooms for you. We are making them so nice and cosy for you. You cannot think what a sweet pleasure it has been to me planning them for your comfort and pleasure. In your sitting-room there's a writing-table with drawers where you can write your contributions to *The Workbox*, and touch up 'Eustace Fitzwygram' so comfortably—and there's a little library case full of books; and there's a——"

"Oh, don't, don't!" said Miss Weevins hysterically. "This is too much; I cannot bear it."

"And we haven't forgotten the piano, the dear little piano your mother used to play, and your little brothers and sisters used to dance to. We all knew how you loved it, and Daddles has actually gone up to town to superintend its removal himself. It was an unwarrantable liberty to take—doing all this without your permission. But you'll forgive us, won't you?"

A few unintelligible, muffled sounds were all that escaped from Miss Weevins' pocket-handkerchief.

"Now, it was all to have been a surprise to you, and I'm very angry with you for making me spoil the whole scheme by telling you of it."

"Oh, I w-w-wish you wouldn't all be so k-k-kind," said Miss Weevins in a dismal howl. "It's more than I can bear."

In a few moments the hair trunk, the worsted-worked bag, and the reticule were redeposited in Miss Weevins' room.

They stayed at Ventnor, Dorrien ever by Clive's side, until blustering, biting March was over, and then there was a move to the bright little house in South Kensington.

A painful tumult of thoughts tore Clive's heart as she passed the threshold from which, in loathing and contempt, she had once been expelled; but a strong arm was round her and a loved voice was whispering comfort in her ear.

After they had been here a week or so, they told her all about poor little Liz, and bitterly did she weep over the sad story. Her immediate act was to send for Milly Pounceby, and when Milly Pounceby came she stared at Clive as at one risen from the dead.

"Oh, Liz, Liz!" she exclaimed as Clive took her by the hand and made her sit near her, "I could almost believe it's you a-lookin' in my face once more."

"You loved her dearly, didn't you?" said Clive.

"Yes, that I did. Everyone that know'd little Liz loved her. But I loved her most of all, for I know'd her best."

"Tell me all about her."

"Look in that glass, miss—ma'am, I mean, beggin' your pardon. Look in that glass, and you'll see little Liz a-lookin' at you!"

"Tell me how she came to fall into that dreadful man's power."

"Me and all the girls, ma'am, we al'ays said that Liz was born to be a lady—not knowin' o' course that she was anythin' but old Mr. Potts' daughter—and I thought it only

natural that she should marry a gentleman. So when this villain come courtin' her, it only seemed to me that what I'd al'ays made up my mind to was goin' to happen. He spoke so honourable and fair that I believed him as much as she did. His family, he said, wouldn't hear of it, and that it would be only when she was his wife and they couldn't help themselves that they'd agree to it. She cried bitterly, did poor little Liz, and begged hard to him to let her tell her old father, or him as she thought was her father. But he got over her with his honeyed words and his false vows; and me, great lumpin' fool, as should have know'd better; he got over me too. There was a mock marriage in a room with only me and the clergyman, a sham one, I suppose, and kep hiccuping, he did, the whole time, and smelt that strong o' brandy as nearly made me sneeze. That villain Garstang, he dazzled us both with a lot o' talk about special licenses and Doctors' Commons, and a lot we know'd nothink of, and we o' course thought it all right. The marriage was at about four o'clock in the mornin', for they was goin' off abroad, he said, by a steamer, for a week; and old Mr. Potts he thought Liz was stayin' at my house, and my mother she thought I was stayin' with Liz. A short time afore the weddin' he was very pertickler about her dress. 'You must get a sealskin jacket trimmed in this way,' he says, describin' a jacket, the very moral of one I seen you in."

"Where, where did you see me?"

"Old Mr. Potts, ma'am, he told me the whole story, and when I heard you was in London, I come hangin' about here to get a sight of you, for they told me it would be like lookin' on little Liz once more. Then he goes on, ma'am: 'you must get a gray felt travellin' hat with a gray feather, and Liz,' he says, 'I don't quite like the way you does your hair. Not so much pomatum, he says. 'Don't yer put no pomatum at all in fact,' he says, 'but just draw it off the forehead plain, and do it up in a great twist behind without no nets and chinons and such like'—just azackly, ma'am, as

you do yours. And little Liz she done everythink he tells her, so pleased and proud like at his thinkin' such a lot about her looks. And did'nt she look real sweet just when she was dressed like that, the morning of the wedding! And when I see her, she looked that born to be a lady and above me that I felt as though there was a great gulf come between us already. 'What are you cryin' about, Milly dear?' she says. 'Nothin', Liz darlin', I says, not wishin' to be a wet blanket. 'But you *are* cryin',' she says, puttin' her arms round me with them sweet little cuddlin' ways of hers. At this I bursts out, I couldn't help myself. 'Oh Liz,' I says, 'you're goin' to be a lady, and you'll be forgettin' all about your poor old friend Milly.' You should have seen her. She tears the gray hat and the sealskin jacket off, and throws them on the floor, and kicks 'em away with her little foot. 'There goes the fine lady,' she says, her beautiful little face all a glowin'. 'Oh Milly, Milly, don't think that of me!' she says, throwin' herself into my arms, and I nigh squeezed the life out of her with huggin' and kissin'. And she wouldn't put them things on again, not she, till I'd sworn I'd never, never think that again of her."

Here, for some moments, Milly Pounceby was overcome by the tender recollections of this touching reminiscence, and Clive, also, cried bitterly.

"Oh, how I should have loved her!" exclaimed the latter.

"Ah, that you would," sobbed Milly Pounceby. Then, after rolling up her handkerchief into a tight ball and dabbing her eyes savagely with it, as if the crying was all their fault, she continued:

"Well, ma'am, after the weddin', he says just afore they're goin' away, 'I'm a bit oneasy in my mind about that there brother o' mine. I'm afeard he's got wind o' this somehow, and he's such a impetyus, passionate sort of a chap he'd even try and stop us goin' away by force.' So when your

husband come upon them, ma'am, little Liz she thought it was the brother he'd told her of, and she screamed with terror directly she seen his angry face, and tried to hold her husband, or what she thought was her husband, back."

The rest Clive knew.

Thus, link by link, had the whole chain of Garstang's villany been exposed. Of course, the anonymous letters were from his pen.

This was not Milly Pounceby's last visit by many.

"Come whenever you like to see me," said Clive; "I shall never be tired of hearing you talk about her."

Gratefully was the offer accepted, and it was not long before Clive discovered that the dearest wish of Milly Pounceby's heart was to marry a certain young tobacconist's assistant, called "'Arry," whom she had met a few months previously. It appeared, however, that "mother wouldn't hear of it, until 'Arry could start in business on his own account."

"And how long will that be?" asked Clive.

"Five year it will be, p'r'aps, afore 'Arry have saved enough," said Milly, with a weary sigh.

Knowing Clive, as the reader should do by now, it is almost needless to add that the young tobacconist and Milly Pounceby had not to wait that period, nor even five weeks, before this "just cause and impediment" to their union was removed. A snug little business in a prosperous and respectable neighbourhood was soon bought for them; and when Harry was brought by Milly to thank their kind little benefactress he started backwards with an exclamation of surprise.

What strange things do happen, to be sure! Milly Pounceby's Harry turned out to be that identical kind-hearted Harry who had so gently pillowed Clive's head on the pile of coats, and so smartly pommelled the wretched "Swipey Brown," on that fell morning when she had lain stunned on the pavement of a London back slum.

But stranger still was it, when, one day as Clive sat by herself, Miss Macnamara Belmont entered the room unannounced, and with her semaphoric fore-arm extended, stalked grimly up to her niece.

"Clive, allow me to shake your hand, and also to kiss you on the forehead."

In mute astonishment Clive submitted to both operations.

"I have received," continued Miss Belmont, "a letter from George, telling me the whole extraordinary story. It is the most striking instance of the saying, that truth is often stranger than fiction, that has ever come within my experience. I wronged you. I ask you to forgive me. I should have received you that morning when you sought my protection, but I admit I recoiled from you, not so much on account of the sin I believed you guilty of, as because your deceit seemed to me vile and revolting beyond sufferance. One afternoon, towards dusk, a few weeks before you came to me, I was driving down the Embankment, when I saw you, as I then thought, come out of a narrow street leading down from the Strand, accompanied by that man Garstang, towards whom I have frequently heard you express the strongest repugnance. You were dressed in a way not befitting your station, as if for purposes of disguise, but I could have sworn to your face, and I drew my own conclusions. I said nothing about it. I knew that if considerations for a husband like Studholme Dorrien, and for a father like George, availed nothing, words from me would be useless. I held my peace, but I assure you, my gorge rose at the very sight of you. The more innocent you looked that morning—and you certainly did look the picture of innocence—the more vehemently you protested, and the higher position of outraged virtue you took up, the more loathsome and unbearable did your deceit appear to me, until at last the interview ended in a violent rupture. And I was wrong.

The person I saw with that man was not you, but the unfortunate child, your sister, and my niece, whom we all had thought dead, murdered in her infancy. There is one point I should like a little more light thrown upon. Why all this implacable hatred, this dire rancour, on the part of this Garstang towards your husband? That Dorrien can inspire dislike in whatever direction he himself feels it I can quite imagine, and I know this man was no favourite of his. But beyond merely snubbing him, I do not see in what way he can have wronged him; and if all the world set to work to lay deep plots against the happiness and welfare of every one who gave them the cold shoulder, the world would have to put up the shutters at once and stop business altogether. There would be no time even for eating and drinking and sleeping. Why should he have concocted and carried out so diabolical a plot?"

"That was the very natural question that occurred to all of us," replied Clive. But Stud's tongue is tied, and except that this wretched creature *did* owe him a grudge, and swore to be revenged, he can say nothing as long as certain conditions are unbroken."

"Strange! But at all events, all is well that ends well. You are changed, Clive, sadly changed. I hope you will soon recover from this shock to your mind. You never loved me, but——"

"You never would let me, Aunt Macnamara."

"Well, well, perhaps it was my fault as much as yours. But there seemed to be something in our natures antagonistic to each other. I am sorry you have suffered so, sincerely sorry. I am touched. Let us be better friends for the future."

There was very little fight left in Clive's nature now, and willingly she responded to Aunt Macnamara's advance by throwing her arms round her and kissing her. Something like a tear stood in each of Miss Belmont's eyes as she said:

"Tell George of this."

"Oh, he will be so pleased. Stay till he comes in."

"Thank you, no. Tell him we are friends." And Aunt Macnamara stalked out of the room.

"I am very glad of this," soliloquised Clive. "After all, Aunt Smack isn't as bad as she seemed, and I know it will be a great weight off Daddles' mind."

One great drawback to the happiness of the now united little circle was the mysterious disappearance from the scene of Dolly Jones, to whom they owed everything. Of course they went to his old lodgings, but he had moved, and they could hear nothing of him. Sorrowfully they came to the conclusion that Dolly was not quite right in his head. They never relaxed their efforts to trace him, but all attempts were unsuccessful.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### A SUCCESSFUL NOVELIST.

BEFORE long another cloud began to steal above the horizon Miss Weevins, though serenely happy, was becoming very fragile and delicate. All those weeks of devoted watching and of anxiety during Clive's illness were now telling upon her feeble constitution. "'Pimpernell,' the homely, old-fashioned little flower which grew in the shade," was evidently curling at the edges. They all remarked this with the keenest concern.

"You must rouse yourself," said Clive one day as she sat with the meek little woman's hand in hers.

"I'll tell you what we'll do. We'll bring out 'Eustace Fitzwygram.' You must finish touching him up, and he must make his bow to the public."

Miss Weevins' eyes sparkled, but not with vanity at the prospect of appearing in print and three-volumed glory. It was a far purer sentiment which lit up her face with pleasure. To feel that her written thoughts were being read in homes far and near, and perhaps stirring the hearts of those who read with gentle love or pity, would be to feel almost as if she herself were being admitted into those homes and hearts.

"I have not much to do to it now," she said. "I am just giving the hero a few of—ahem!—of Mr. Dorrien's striking characteristics, and a few final touches here and there. But really I shrink—in fact I feel I should hardly be justified in——"

"Yes, I'm sure you will be. You finish it," said Clive, "and Stud and I will take it to a publisher, and you will have no trouble with the arrangements. We'll do all that. I'm sure it will be as great a success as it deserves, and that's saying a great deal."

Thus encouraged, Miss Weevins set to work at "Eustace," and it did Clive's heart good to see how well the task agreed with her little friend.

"You must accustom yourself by degrees to becoming a public character," said Clive one day as she sat working in the little authoress's room, while "Pimpernell's powerful pen" was scratching busily over the paper.

"He-he! dear me, and how am I to do that?" asked Miss Weevins, not that she had the least idea of becoming a public character, but because she loved this playful banter of Clive's; and as she laid down her pen and looked up there was a pleased air of expectancy about her, as if remarking to herself: "Now there's something rich coming."

"Of course we shall be seeing some day in the papers something like this: 'At yesterday's meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Miss Weevins, the well-known authoress, read an able and exhaustive paper on 'The Best Methods for the Amelioration of Humanity.' The talented lady was listened to with rapt attention throughout, and in the discussion which followed Miss Weevins successfully and brilliantly defended——'"

"Oh, how can you! Dear me. He-he!" said Miss Weevins, shaking her head, and shivering all through her little body at the bare idea of such a thing. "But you were going to tell me how I'm gradually to accustom myself to this sort of thing."

"Yes, I was going to suggest that you should read me some parts of your story. That would be a step in the right direction, and I should so like to hear it."

Miss Weevins blushed very much, but at last with much trepidation she gave Clive a few extracts. After the reading,

however, the auditor knew about as much of Eustace Fitzwygram as she had known before it. Over the little jokes Miss Weevins grew so helplessly mirthful, at the fine parts she became so feebly shy, and over the pathetic bits she wept so profusely, that never at any stage was she intelligible. Clive was not a captious critic, however, and sympathised with her in each succeeding mood.

"I often hear you playing your dear little piano very softly to yourself." (Clive always spoke of the little old-fashioned spinet in terms of endearment.) "I suppose it's a change when you get tired of writing, and perhaps it gives you fresh ideas?"

"Oh yes," said Miss Weevins, affectionately patting one of the spinet's thin legs; "it is such an endless source of inspiration to me. When I wish for something stirring and martial, I play the 'Battle of Prague;' when I'm trying to be philosophical, I play 'Rousseau's Dream;' and when—he-he! dear me—when I want something—something rollicking in fact, I play 'Drops o' Brandy;' and such is the extraordinary force of imagination, that after playing this for some time I often get off the music-stool positively reeling. And then," concluded Miss Weevins with a sudden change from gay to grave, "when a hope and a desire fills me that here and there something in my book may stir a thoughtless heart with a feeling deeper than mere amusement, I play over some of those sweet and simple old hymns my dear mother used to play and sing to us as children, and a train of gentle, sweet ideas floats softly through my mind, which I try to put on paper."

Clive kissed Miss Weevins, and said she was sure these hopes would be fulfilled.

One day, a few weeks after this conversation, the little authoress struggled into Clive's room under a weighty pile of manuscript which she placed before her friend, and then burst into tears of excitement.

"I feel as if I were parting with some dear, dear friends,"

she said. "Before you came they were my only companions."

That very afternoon Clive and Dorrien went the round of the publishing profession with "Eustace" neatly done up in brown paper. The leading houses would have nothing to do with him until he had been submitted to their "readers," a course possibly involving some months' delay. This Clive could not brook, and eventually they hit upon Messrs. Glammer and Gloss, who turned out novels by the score, and who, on receiving a sum of money sufficient to cover all risks, undertook to bring out the book in the space of a few weeks. Of course, this financial preliminary was kept a profound secret from Miss Weevins, and "Eustace" was supposed to have been accepted on his own merits, which probably he would have been. Messrs. Glammer and Gloss were as good as their word, and in little more than a month the book was announced "now ready," and to be had "at all the libraries."

Clive and her husband and father at once went round to the principal booksellers, and, unknown to the authoress, ordered "Eustace Fitzwygram," by dozens. They allowed no expense to stand in the way of making the book a success, or at all events making Miss Weevins think that it was. The consequence was, that when Miss Weevins summoned up enough courage one day to creep into Messrs. Glammer and Gloss' establishment, and ask a clerk how the book was going off, she was told that there was quite a run on it.

Miss Weevins hastened home on the wings of delight. "How pleased *she* will be to hear it, for my sake," she thought. "Dear me, it quite gives me a delicious sense of feeling as if I had personal friends all over the country."

Pleasurable excitement and quick walking lent quite a healthy glow to Miss Weevins' cheeks as she burst into Clive's room.

"There's quite a run on it! Fancy—quite a run on

it! Those were the clerk's very words. Oh, I knew you would be so glad."

"That I am," said Clive, as she smiled lovingly on the little woman. "And so you are a real live successful authoress? We shall be getting afraid of you. And of course you must take to parting your hair on one side now, won't you?"

"I do dread the reviews so," said Miss Weevins, after laughing very much at this last sally.

"I don't," said Clive stoutly. "I'm sure they will all praise it up to the skies."

This prediction was hardly verified. In about a couple of weeks the first notice of "Eustace Fitzwygram" appeared.

Clive was eagerly casting her eye over it when Miss Weevins entered the breakfast-room, on which the former hurriedly tried to hide the paper.

"Is it a review? Oh, is it?" asked Miss Weevins anxiously.

"Yes—no. No, it isn't. Here, Daddles, you want the paper, don't you?" (In a whisper) "Hold it tight."

"Why not let me see it? I'm sure it's a review. There, I caught sight of the name in one of the columns. How could you say it wasn't?"

"Well, it's not what *I* call a review. It's not a proper one. Don't read it."

Miss Weevins begged so hard, however, that at last they gave her the paper.

Every word of the review she read with a pain-stricken countenance. She was deeply religious, very romantic (as the reader knows), and as ignorant of the world as an infant; and this is how Eustace Fitzwygram himself was described: "The hero is an incongruous mixture of Mr. Chadband, Guy Livingstone, Don Quixote, and Verdant Green. He is a thing no one has met or will ever meet in this world. He evinces occasional vigorous traits" (evidently taken from Dorrien), "which sit on his flabby,

mawkish character as unnaturally as Wellington's Roman nose would appear on the countenance of a new-born infant."

After thus slaughtering the wretched Eustace, the reviewer went at the authoress herself tooth and nail.

"We protest against such books as this one. They tempt numberless young women to do likewise. Consequently, hours, weeks, years are wasted which might have been usefully employed in minding the baby, darning the stockings, reading to the sick and aged, or in many other occupations within the capabilities of these would-be authoresses. Or, if they hold a higher position in life, we would say to them as was said to Lady Clara Vere de Vere: 'Are there no beggars at your gate, no poor about your lands?' There is a still graver charge to be brought against the writers of such books. They not only tempt other young women from the duties of those stations to which it has pleased God to call them, but they themselves fly directly in the very face of Providence, who has denied them brains and opportunities for gaining that knowledge of human nature which would justify them in attempting to depict its workings for the edification of their fellow-creatures. Viewed from this standpoint, these books are absolutely vicious."

The timid shrinking spirit winced under an unkind word as if it had been a blow, and concluding the last sentence, Miss Weevins looked up for a moment with a dazed, agonised expression, as if a man had dashed his great hard fist into her face, and then leaning her head on her thin hands she burst into a passionate sob.

Clive's arms were round her in a moment, Clive's soft cheek was against hers, Clive's soft voice was whispering comfort to her.

"Don't, darling, don't take it so to heart. It's as unfair as it is cruel."

"Don't think it's wounded vanity—oh, don't think *that*," said Miss Weevins. "My fondest hopes had been

that it might do some good, not much—I dared not hope that—but still a little good, just a little, and even if it did no good I *did* think it would be only harmless—but—'vicious!' oh!"

"Don't mind that," said Clive. "Whoever wrote that review did not know truth and purity and sweetness when he saw them. Come, darling, dry your eyes, kiss me, and laugh at it."

Meekly Miss Weevins did as she was bid. She dabbed her burning eyes with her handkerchief, she kissed Clive, and she said "he-he." The iron, though, had sunk deep into her soul.

But there was balm in Gilead. A few days afterwards Clive, who surreptitiously took in every journal and diligently searched for notices, rushed into Miss Weevins' room, enthusiastically waving a paper.

"Now listen. Compose yourself and listen," said Clive, seating herself down and smoothing out the paper with pleasure-trembling hands. "This is something like a review."

Miss Weevins listened with rapt attention, and the tears trickled down her cheeks, but they were not tears of pain this time.

"But now listen to the wind-up; that's the best of all," said Clive, her own eyes brimming over.

"'One peculiarity of this book, and a very tender, charming peculiarity too, is that the reader, as the story progresses, is drawn towards the writer by some gentle sympathetic process, which at the close of the work culminates in a desire to shake her by the hand. We ourselves experienced this feeling, and so will all readers, we think. There is an utter absence of worldly knowledge in this book which would bring ruin on most stories, but in this particular one we would not have it otherwise than it is. There is nothing in the title-page to tell us that the book is the work of a woman, but in every page of the story itself a woman's

gentle touch, a woman's loving heart, a pure woman's purity are apparent—a woman to whom we are sure we could say,

> When pain and anguish wring the brow
> A ministering angel thou.' "

"Isn't that beautiful?" said Clive. "Oh, darling, one would almost fancy that the writer of that could have seen you nursing me night and day. I can endorse that. 'When pain and anguish wrung *my* brow, a min——"

The remainder was smothered in a hug and a sob.

A few days after there was another favourable review, and then another, and altogether "Eustace Fitzwygram" fared very well, notwithstanding the first hard hit he received.

## CHAPTER XL.

### RECONCILIATION.

As the season advanced, and as Dorrien took his walks abroad, his footsteps were dogged. He was often watched into his club, out of it, and back to his own home again. Sometimes even as he sat in the balcony of his house, enjoying an after-dinner cigar with the colonel and Clive in the cool of the evening, the same keen observant gaze was on his movements. In all this secret spying there was no evil intent. The eyes that watched were often filling with tears, and the watcher was no other than old Lord Todmorden.

In profound unconsciousness of this fond system of *espionage*, Dorrien remained a considerable time, for his lordship was as wily as a Red Indian on the war-trail, and to escape detection would dodge up a street or dive down an alley in the twinkling of an eye. One day, however, there was a sudden change in his tactics. Walking after Dorrien, whom he had just watched out of his club, he gently touched him on the arm, and Dorrien, on turning sharply round, was confronted by a careworn old face, with moistened eyes and a trembling lip.

"Stud, let us make it up, let us be friends, my boy, my heart is yearning towards——Tra-la-la-ri-fol-di-diddle-lol. Nice day, eh? Town very full this year. Seen the pictures?"

The old man had felt he was on the point of breaking

down, and had pulled himself up with a jerk just in time, and of course, according to his nature, he had gone into the opposite extreme.

Heartily Dorrien grasped the outheld hand. He had never harboured a vindictive thought against the old man.

"Make it up? of course, my dear uncle, with the greatest pleasure in the world."

"I am delighted to hear this, Stud. It is the happiest moment I have known for a long time, and it is such a pleasure to me to think that you have at last seen fit to make the first advance. It could not have come from me, Stud, you will quite see that."

"No, of course, it could not," said Dorrien, with a quiet smile.

"You knew my cold determination of character too well ever to hope that I should have been the one to seek you out. You knew me too well for that, my boy, eh?"

"Certainly."

"But from you, as being the younger, all this—this *empressement*, I may say, this anxiety to be friends, this following me about, this dogging my footsteps, and at last stopping me in the very streets, comes gracefully and without any loss of dignity. And now, Stud, my boy, since you have been so pressing, let us shake hands again."

Lord Todmorden seized his nephew's hand, and wrung it for about a minute.

"God bless you, Stud! My heart bled for you, my boy, when I heard of your trouble. I would have come forward *then*, Stud, when you were down, but you had gone, no one knew where, and when I heard of you again the storm had passed over your head, and all was once more serene and calm. Strange story, Stud. Take me to her. I recollect her, a sweet-faced-looking little girl. I should like her to love me. I think her love would be a very precious gift. I am very lonely. Do you think she will forgive me, Stud, for doing the part of the wicked old uncle?"

"Forgive you? of course she will," said Dorrien, his voice slightly trembling as he thought of his true little wife's forgiveness of a much greater wrong than an old man's opposition to a match. "She will receive you with open arms. Come along; I was just going back to lunch."

"Not just yet, Stud. I wish to unburden my mind of a weight. Let us step into your club and have a little private conversation first."

"Very well, come along. There won't be any one in the smoking-room at this time of the day; we shall be quite private there."

"Well, and how's her ladyship?" asked Dorrien, by way of reopening the conversation, as they took their seats on one of the luxurious ottomans of the now deserted smoking-room.

"Bolted, Stud, bolted," was the reply.

"Bolted! What, with a man?"

"Half-a-dozen, I should think. That is just what I wanted to tell you about. She was a bad 'un, Stud, a regular bad 'un."

"So much for real love-matches and engagements of long standing," said Dorrien, as he coolly lit a cigar.

"I could never have made anything of her, Stud. She laughed at my mechanical genius—rebelled, sir, positively rebelled against it. She refused to have the coffee-grinding or butter-churning machine attached to her carriage, and all that valuable motive power of her wheels was lost, sir. Nothing could have kept that woman straight. I did everything in my power. I brought my inventive genius in its full force to bear on the effort, but it was not of the slightest use. She was a terrible one for making eyes at the men. As far as being jealous was concerned, I should not have cared if she had taken them out of her head and thrown them down their throats, but it was my duty to enforce, or at least to try and enforce, circumspection of behaviour. I constructed a beautiful little contrivance to be fixed on to

her bonnet, and on the approach of any of her numerous hangers-on, when I was driving with her, I had simply to pull a string, and two small blinkers—best cardboard, nice shape, pretty design on each (what objection she could have had to them I know not)—slid forward and effectually screened her gaze. Would you believe it, sir, would you believe the unreasonableness of that woman, when I tell you that she absolutely, point-blank refused to wear it?"

"Poor devil!" said Dorrien, "I don't wonder she bolted."

"Stud," remarked his lordship with a sudden change in his manner, "I see that you have still preserved throughout your trials that outspoken candour which to anyone but myself might prove disconcerting. Never mind, my boy, never mind, though. It wouldn't be the old Studholme Dorrien, my undutiful nephew, if he didn't sometimes ruffle up his old uncle the wrong way. She's gone, there's an end of her. Come along, Stud, let me refresh my sore old eyes with the sight of something virtuous and true. Take me to my little niece, Clive Dorrien."

## CHAPTER XLI.

### "KISS ME, DOLLY."

FROM that evening at Ventnor, when Dolly had brought life and happiness to Clive, she never heard of him until on a certain day at the beginning of November, just two years ago, when she received a letter from him by the last post at night. The sight of his handwriting, of course, elicited an exclamation of surprise and delight from her.

"Stud," she cried, "here's a letter from dear old Dolly. Oh, how I hope and pray that it may contain some good news about himself," she said, as she tore open the envelope with eager hands.

Dorrien rose from his seat and anxiously looked over her shoulder as she read. The letter was directed to Clive, but the contents were addressed to both of them:

"Curragh Camp, Kildare,
"Tuesday.

"MY DEAR CLIVE AND DORRIEN,

"Just a few words of farewell. I am once more a soldier—a private one at present; but I hope I shall win my commission back in the field. I have enlisted into the 23rd Welsh Fusiliers, and we leave this for the Gold Coast to-morrow evening. Do not think I have avoided you all this time from mere caprice. Never think as badly of your old friend as that. I had my reasons. Good-bye. God

bless you, my dear little Clive, my more than sister; God bless you, Dorrien, dear old friend. The happiness of you both has been and ever will be as long as life lasts the prayer of your fast and affectionate old friend,

"DOLLY."

"Oh, that wretched girl!" sobbed Clive. "It's all her doing. Dolly has never been the same since that day when I found out how he had been treated by her. Poor, poor old Dolly! Fancy him a private! Stud, can't we get over in time? We must try and see him before he goes. I'd give anything to shake his hand once more before he goes to that deadly climate, and that land of savages. We owe everything to him. Let us go, Stud."

"Yes, Clive," said Dorrien, strangely moved, "we *do* owe everything to him. We'll go over on the chance of being in time to see him once more. If we can help it, little woman, poor old Dolly shan't leave the country without a friend to wish him 'God speed.'"

The next morning they started from Euston Square by the early train, and travelled all day *viâ* Holyhead, Kingstown, and Dublin.

It was late in the evening and pitch dark when they arrived at the railway station for the Curragh. An outside car was speedily obtained, and on it they started off to the camp.

As they emerged from the road on to the far-famed Curragh of Kildare, and when a dreary expanse of down still lay between them and the camp, far in the distance, a lurid glare of light from hundreds of torches was thrown upon a moving mass of humanity, while cheer after cheer, mingling with the strains of military music, rose to the heavens.

"Begorra, it's the Twenty-thirrud, it is, marchin' out," said the driver, excitedly. "Yer honour an' the lady's just in toime."

On came the regiment, headed by all the bands in camp, and surrounded by an excited crowd hanging on to it so closely as to play sad havoc with its formation. As is always the case, the calmest were the men who had the work before them. The excited cries and shouts and cheers were confined to the swaying mass around them. Officers' hands were seized and wrung by friends from other corps as they passed on, and women and men were constantly rushing into the ranks to shake the hand of some "pal" they recognised. There was no one to shake the hand of one private soldier. No one knew him, and he marched on with a steadfast gaze and a swelling heart.

"Cheer, boys, cheer," "Good-bye, sweetheart," and "Auld Lang Syne" were played by the bands, each well-known farewell air eliciting hearty cheers from the crowd, but the loudest, wildest cheer of any, and one in which the regiment itself joined with a mighty, hoarse roar, was when one band struck up the "March of the Men of Harlech."

"We shall never make him out in all this crush," said Dorrien, as, with Clive's little form nestling up to his side, they stood awaiting the approach of the concourse.

The regiment looked weird as the waving torches shed their fitful flare on the strange gray uniform it wore.

"I'm afraid it's no use," said Dorrien, as he stood protecting Clive from the excited throng as it surged past them. "This Ashantee dress seems to change the men altogether. We shall never recognise him."

Clive does not answer. Her face is deadly pale; her heart is beating wildly, and her eyes are fixed with a piercing gaze on the gray-clad forms passing before her.

The regiment had nearly gone by, and bitter disappointment was beginning to take the place of eager scrutiny in Clive's face, when suddenly she exclaimed in a burst of excitement, "There, there he is!" and in one moment she had broken through the ranks and was in the midst of the great stalwart soldiers.

"Oh Dolly," she said, seizing his hand, and clinging to him. "Dear old Dolly, we have come to say good-bye."

Dolly nearly dropped his rifle.

"Clive! oh, this is kind! Dorrien!"

"Dolly, old man, God bless you! we have come all this way just to say those words to you," said Dorrien. A wring of the hand was Dolly's only response.

"Come, close up, close up there!" said an officer of the company.

"Kiss me, Dolly," said Clive, holding up her face. Dolly stooped down, and as he kissed her forehead a scalding tear fell on the upturned little face.

The next moment he had passed on, and Clive and Dorrien stood side by side, watching the regiment marching away to the strains of that well-known soldier's air, "The girls we leave behind us."

"Oh Stud, I wasn't half affectionate enough," sobbed Clive; "I do so wish I had thrown my arms round him and given him another kiss. Poor, poor Dolly! I wonder if he's thinking of the girl *he* is leaving behind him."

Yes, Dolly was. The little face, sorrow-stricken and loving, was still before his eyes; and far above the cheers, the roll of the drums, and the fifes' shrill notes, were still ringing those simple, innocent words, which, amidst toil and conflict, amidst the rattle of musketry and the savage war-cries of the enemy, were to haunt him to the hour of his death with a gentle murmur: "Kiss me, Dolly."

## CHAPTER XLII.

### "A REGULAR ATHOLSTONE!"

On a certain day about half a year after Clive and Dorrien stood on the Curragh of Kildare, watching their old friend marching away amidst cheers and music, a white-headed old man journeyed down the Great Eastern line. His destination was a certain cathedral town in one of the Eastern Counties, and on arrival there he alighted from the train and was driven in a fly straight to the cathedral. The town was the capital of the county from which Colonel Belmont's old regiment took its title.

By the time the old gentleman reached the cathedral it was late in the afternoon, and the doors were closed, but the services of the old verger who lived close by having been obtained, an entrance was soon gained. The venerable old pile was an object of interest for miles around. Without and within, it was a delicate treat to the artistic eye, and, to the cultivated mind, it bristled with ancient memories. But no sightseer, idle or discriminating, no archæological enthusiast was the old gentleman. Manifestly, it was neither curiosity nor pleasure that he was bent upon. His eyes were dim, not with age—though he was old—but with blinding sorrow. The many beauties of architecture around him were blurred, indistinct, unconsidered, and the memory of the past, instead of carrying him to the remote ages of his country's history, took him no farther back than a few

short years, raised him no higher than one absorbing, bitter, homely recollection. "Kindly point out where it is," said the visitor after a few preliminary questions, and slipping half-a-crown into the verger's palm, "and then leave me alone for a short time."

"Thank you, sir; you'll find it over there. You can't mistake it. It ain't been put up more than a week, and looks new alongside the rest."

The speaker then withdrew, as requested, and the old gentleman with faltering steps walked to the spot indicated.

In a few moments he stopped in front of a marble tablet, and bowed his white head down before it. In prayer or silent grief he remained in this position for a short time, and then with trembling hands he held his double glasses up to his eyes, and as he slowly read the inscription the tears one after another trickled down his cheeks. These were the words which wrung the old man's heart and drew those bitter tears from his eyes:

To the Memory

OF

AUGUSTUS ATHOLSTONE JONES,

FORMERLY A CAPTAIN IN THE —TH REGIMENT,

WHO,

AS A PRIVATE SOLDIER OF THE 23RD ROYAL WELSH FUSILIERS,

WAS SHOT THROUGH THE HEART WHILST

GALLANTLY LEADING THE ADVANCE THROUGH THE BUSH ON THE MARCH TO COOMASSIE.

THIS TABLET IS HERE PLACED BY HIS OLD BROTHER OFFICERS,

WITH WHOM HIS SIMPLE, GENEROUS, AND KINDLY NATURE HAD MADE HIM AN UNIVERSAL FAVOURITE.

CONSPICUOUS BY HIS DARING,

HE WAS ONE OF THE FIRST TO FALL IN THE CAMPAIGN,

AND WAS BURIED ON THE BANKS OF THE PRAH.

"Oh, Gus, Gus, my poor boy!" sobbed the old man as he concluded the inscription. "I never meant to drive you to this. You must have thought my heart as hard and as cold as this white marble. But it wasn't, Gus. It wasn't my heart, my poor boy; it was my head that was at fault; my head that never played me false before. Night and day my heart said to me, 'Send for him, bring him back;' and my head, accustomed only to scheme and calculate, said, 'No; none of this weakness. Let him first fulfil the conditions you've imposed on him.' Gus, I killed you. Your blood is on your old father's head. It was I—I, with my stubborn pride and mistaken sense of duty, who cast that bullet which pierced your simple, true heart."

By degrees the old man's grief calmed down; and seating himself in an adjacent pew, he produced from a business-like pocket-book a letter dingy and torn with frequent perusals.

"Though I know every word of it by heart," he said, "I'll read it here once more in his own handwriting."

"Her Majesty's Troopship *Tamar*,
"Kingstown,
"November —th, 1873.

"MY DEAR FATHER,

"I have had a hard fight of it, and if I have failed it has not been for want of trying. I have done my utmost. You sent me from your presence 'to learn the value of money,' you said, 'by some sort of self-denial.' If self-denial teaches this, I have had plenty of it, and I ought to know my lesson thoroughly by this time. I have suffered what to me with my former experience of life was utter poverty, and, what was infinitely worse, loneliness. I have never borrowed—or 'begged you would call it—a shilling since I last saw you, though I have occasionally known what it has been to want one. I had kind, loving friends, who would have shared their last crust with me, but I gave

up the solace of their friendship, the sweetest thing in life that was left to me, because I knew what a constant source of pain it was to them to see me struggling and not to be allowed to hold out a helping hand. That was the worst of all my privations. I tell you all this, my dear father, not to reproach you with any want of feeling—on my honour, it is not in this spirit that I write—but that, if I never return, you may be able in the future to think of me as of one who did his best, however feeble it may have been, to carry out a father's injunctions. I have enlisted into a regiment under orders for Ashantee, and I now write this in the transport in which we are to sail for the Gold Coast. I may win my commission back again, but it is far more probable I shall never return. I do not know why 'a regular Atholstone' should have been considered a term of reproach with you and my brothers, but it has been constantly cast in my teeth as if it had been some vile epithet. The Atholstones have always been a brave race, and have given up their lives for their country's sake on many a battle-field, and if I am killed I only hope you will be able to say of me in death as you have so often said of me in life—'a regular Atholstone!' Now, good-bye, my dear father. God bless you. Give my love to my brothers if you think they will care about hearing anything of me,

"And believe me,

"Your affectionate son,

"A. A. J."

Such was the letter which old Jones wept over. "Yes, yes, yes," he said, placing his finger on the line, "'conspicuous by his daring,'" "you did, you died a regular Atholstone. Your brave hope is fulfilled, my boy; your old father, here, where this bears witness to your bravery, says of you in death as he has so often said in life—'a regular Atholstone!'"

It was only when the verger, whose tea was waiting,

said that he wished to lock the doors, that old Jones tore himself from the spot, and returned to town by the next train.

* * * * * *

Old Jones is still hard at work making money. The same success as ever attends all his undertakings. His eldest son has been a Member of Parliament for many years, and is, with his thorough business knowledge and ways, an invaluable man on committees. He is most useful to his party, and on its accession to power will, to a certainty, have a seat in the Cabinet. Like his father, he has married the daughter of a peer, and is in a fair way to gaining a peerage for himself. Old Jones is proud of him, very proud. But the contemplation of the future glories of his house does not stir his blood as it is stirred by the thoughts of the son who, in the service of his country, found the grave of a lowly private soldier in an African wilderness.

## CONCLUSION.

THAT Retributive Justice should claim Captain Garstang in the concluding chapter is what the reader, after having perused thus far his iniquities and their dire consequences, has a right to expect. His mangled corpse should be served up now. An express train, a leaky yacht, a bolting horse, or some other one of the hundred different means of polishing off the villain of a story should be called into requisition. But the process of Poetic Justice is not always summary. Captain Garstang still lives, and it is with a full sense of the injury thereby inflicted on the reader that I make the statement. He resides altogether on the Continent, his native shores being too hot for him, and in their seasons he frequents certain shady places of resort where characters are not inquired into very rigidly. The good looks, of that slangy, flashy order, which were once his, have quite gone. He is bloated, pimply, and red-faced. Day and night he drinks, smokes, and gambles. He never takes any exercise except what he gets by walking round a billiard-table, and even that much he accomplishes with difficulty. His back is "ricked," he tells people, and that is why he does not ride or shoot now.

"Infernal fellow jumped on me out hunting," he exclaims with a curse. He lies. It was not out hunting that Captain Garstang's spine was injured. It was done in that moment when Studholme Dorrien, with right and might in his arm, had hurled him to the pavement with

a grievous wrench. The injury condemns him to perpetual torture of mind, compared with which the physical pain is nothing. It is an ever-present reminder of his hated antagonist's superiority in brute strength, as in every other way. He never revisits his old haunts in London. No nefarious and lucrative business can tempt him thither. It is said that he is "wanted" in this country on certain charges connected with other people's signatures.

He drinks deeply. He is never quite drunk—he is too well seasoned for that—but is always hovering on the confines of inebriation.

> 'Tis evermore the prologue to his sleep.
> He'll watch the horologe a double set
> If drink rock not his cradle.

The consequence is, he always has a very bad head in the mornings, and, as he himself with fierce blasphemy puts it, "hell-fire" in his throat. Altogether, his existence is not a happy one.

Enough of Captain Garstang.

Old Lord Todmorden is happier now than he has been for many years. He is a constant visitor at the house in South Kensington, and in his eyes Clive is perfection. Were you to go up to him now and hint that Miss Torkingham in any one point of excellence approached her, you would probably lay yourself open to a violent assault. He is, perhaps, a trifle madder than he used to be, but a word or a look from Clive is always sufficient to restrain his wildest eccentricities. He gets on capitally with the old colonel, and, out of compliment to that old veteran's military proclivities, has invented a new knapsack for the British army, which is bound to strangle the first man who wears it on a march. The Conservatives being in office at present, he is of course a violent Radical, and declares that the country is fast drifting back to the old feudal system. In this belief,

he awaits with calm resignation that not far-distant period, when it shall be incumbent on his position as an English baron to throw one of the Rothschilds into his coal-cellar in Berkeley Square—which will have to do duty as the good old historic "dungeon 'neath the castle moat"—and there extract from his captive one tooth daily to the tune of several hundred marks apiece.

Miss Weevins has given up writing novels. Her first and only book, "Eustace Fitzwygram," was merely the effect of a cause which no longer exists. Too timid to mix with the world, yet with a heart full to overflowing with peace and goodwill towards it, she had, in her desolate solitude, been fain to create a little world of her own. But now she lives amongst friends of real flesh and blood, and there are countless loving offices to do for them which occupy her time more sweetly than in treading the flowery path of fiction. She is a treasure beyond all price in the household. She and the old colonel are fast allies. They are knit closely together by a subject which they have in common, and of which they never tire. In adoration and devotion to Clive, she runs the old man close. She is still very timid, and has that nervous trick of saying, "He-he! dear me," just the same as ever. The tinkling tones of the spinet are often heard in the twilight, when Clive comes in and says, "Now, we must have one of the old tunes on the dear little piano." She has learned no new ones. It would seem like deserting old friends to play anything but "The Battle of Prague," "The Copenhagen Waltzes," and "Drops o' Brandy." The last gay, roystering melody is more in request than formerly, for she is now oftener in a joyous mood than when she lived at Mrs. Crump's.

The wooden-legged old soldier, Potts, still drags on his mutilated existence. He is very much broken. He spends his evenings regularly with Milly and her husband, the young tobacconist. There is always for him the snuggest arm-chair by the cosy fireside, a hearty welcome, a glass of grog,

and as many pipes-full of the choicest tobacco as he can smoke. Milly looks upon him as a trust bequeathed to her by her well-beloved little friend, Liz, and is like a daughter to him. She wanted him to take up his abode altogether with them, but he said, "No, no, Milly, my dear gurl, I'll never desert the quarter *she* made so bright and sweet." He is pleased to approve in the highest terms of Milly's choice; but he thinks him thrown away in his present vocation, and says "he had ought t've been a soldier." Colonel Belmont and Clive often go to see him, and at the sight of the latter the tears trickle down his furrowed cheeks.

Dorrien cherishes his wife with all the greater love and tenderness for having felt what it was to lose her. In his mind, no care and attention of his can ever make amends for his doubt and desertion. Though still with a great deal of the same outspoken independence of manner, he is not quite so "bumptious" as his male friends used to think him. The fiery furnace of trial through which he passed has refined him, and the general opinion of all those who know him is that he has vastly improved. He is a Member of Parliament, having, as Lord Todmorden's nominee, been returned without opposition for a small borough in which his lordship's influence was paramount. But though he does not represent an important constituency, and is a young member, his maiden speech on some military question stamped his worth, and when he speaks he is listened to. Both the old men watch his career with intense interest, and somewhat indiscriminating admiration. The old colonel's pleasant day-dream is that he is rapidly developing into a sound and able War Minister.

Under the same roof which shelters his loved little daughter, the worn and maimed old soldier lies down to rest in his old narrow camp-bed in peace and happiness. The wound in his heart, caused by that bitter thought that in his overweening fondness he had spoiled his child to her own

misery and ruin, is quite healed now. "Her happiness is built on a rock," he again says to himself, not, as he used to think, because she is the wife of Studholme Dorrien, but because in her purity and goodness he reads a guarantee of her happiness hereafter. Often in the evenings, as he smokes his cigar, she sits in her old place on his knee, and the sweetest sound which falls on his ears is her voice, as it softly whispers, "Darling old Daddles."

Of the harmless folly and frivolity of youth Clive had had her full share, but she was never worldly. She is, if possible, less so now than ever. Of all people she ever met, the most simple and unworldly were her two staunch friends in dire need, Miss Weevins and Dolly; and the lesson thus gained, that worth and worldliness seldom go together, has sunk deep into her heart. I do not mean to say that she is a recluse or a prude. She is far from being either the one or the other. To this day, she cannot speak of poor Dolly Jones without an aching heart and a glistening eye. His sad and lowly yet glorious fate was a heavy blow to them all, and he is still mourned for deeply. She attributes all his misfortunes to that wretched jilt of her own imagination, and is very bitter against her. This is the only drop of gall in Clive's heart; but as the object of this undying acrimony is a purely imaginary being, the poison is not of a very deadly nature. Of the fact, that she herself had been the thief who had stolen Dolly's simple heart, she lives, and ever will live, in blissful ignorance. Luckily for her peace of mind, those words which were trembling on Dolly's lips, as described in the second chapter of this story, remained for ever unspoken, and the secret now lies buried with that simple, faithful heart in a lonely spot on the banks of the Prah.

THE END.

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